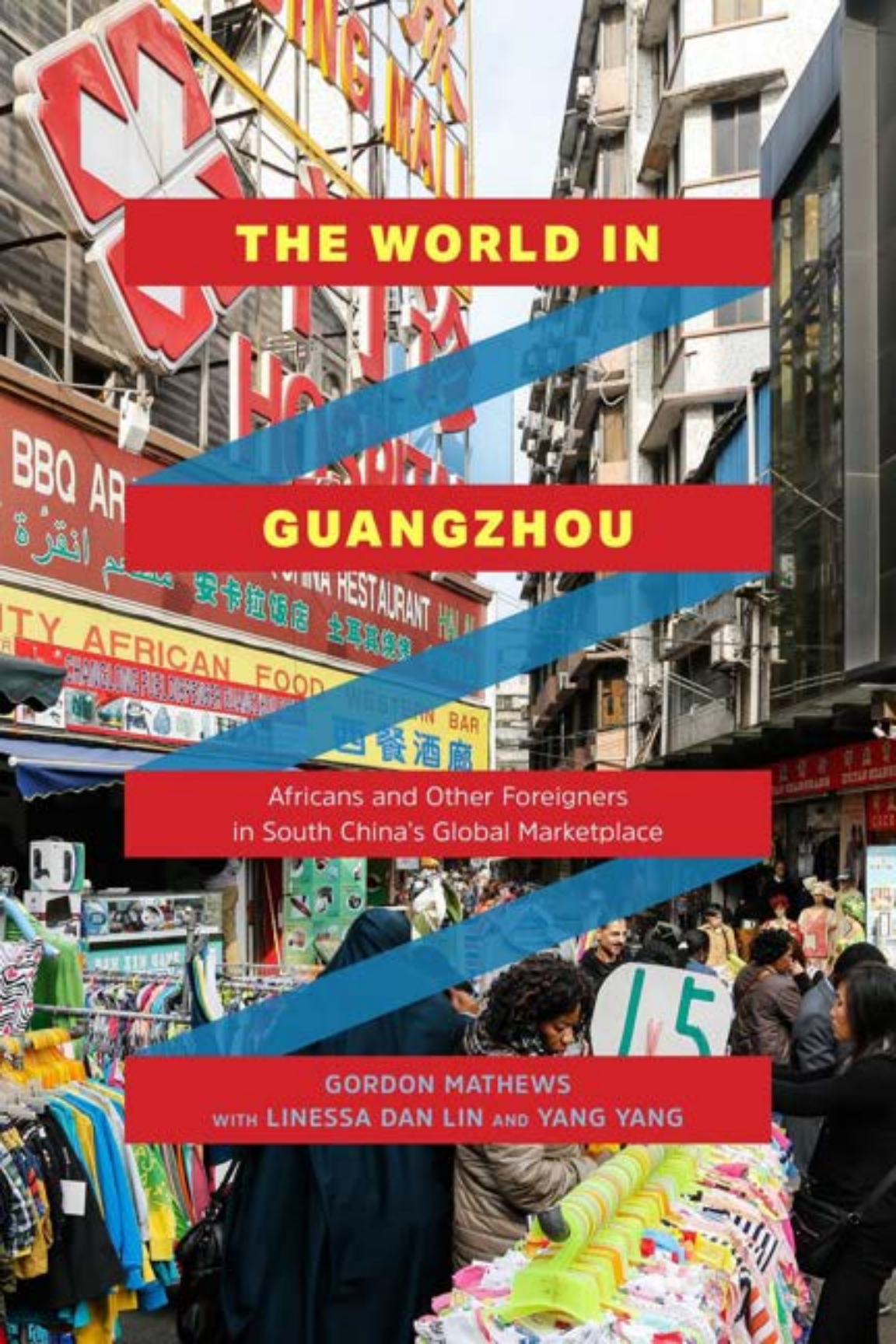
THE WORLD IN
GUANGZHOU
Africans and Other Foreigners
in South China's Global Marketplace
GORDON MATHEWS
WITH LINESSA DAN LIN AND YANG YANG

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ONE

Introduction

What This Book Is About

There are certain cities in certain eras that stand out as magnets for those across the globe who have dreams. New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was such a place, with immigrants at Ellis Island awaiting their chance to pursue the American dream in a new world far from the European villages and slums into which many of them were born. Today, one such place is Guangzhou, the urban center of the world's manufacturing powerhouse, the Pearl River Delta. Guangzhou today is a city that for its global opportunities attracts foreigners the world over.

Guangzhou has a large population of foreigners, but how many is unclear. China as a whole had some 594,000 immigrants living in the country in 2010, according to the national census,[1] less than 1 of every 2,000 people in the country. Guangzhou numbers are all over the map. One recent report estimates that from January to August 2014, Guangzhou, a city of some 13–14 million people, hosted 3.05 million inbound or outbound foreigners, with 86,000 foreigners having registered residence in the city.[2] Another website estimates that about 500,000 foreigners are in Guangzhou at any given time.[3] There are 34,000 permanent resident foreigners, according to one

website,[4] 47,000 according to another,[5] and 120,000, according to a third.[6] Exact figures are impossible to ascertain, both because official figures are secret or unknown and also because many foreigners in Guangzhou are illegal residents of the city. It's safe to say only that while Guangzhou has a large number of foreigners, whether legal or illegal, counted or uncounted, it still is a very tiny number within a huge Chinese population.

These foreigners are a wide range of people, from Japanese and European corporate employees to traders from all over the world exporting Chinese goods to their home countries and regions. Guangzhou is a major center for the purchase of cheap knockoff goods exported to South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, and particularly the Middle East and Africa. The developing world entrepreneurs of Guangzhou, especially the Africans who make up their largest number, play an essential role in making this trade possible.

In this book, after looking at the range of foreigners in Guangzhou, I explore the lives and trade of African entrepreneurs in Guangzhou. In 2013–2014, I stayed in Guangzhou's Xiaobei area, the working center and leisure haunt of much of its African and Arab population. I considered these entrepreneurs through the lens of "low-end globalization"[7]—not the globalization of multinational corporations with all their lawyers and advertising budgets, but of traders sending relatively small amounts of goods under the radar of the law, bribing customs agents on different continents, and getting these goods back home to stalls and street vendors. This is globalization as experienced by the majority of the world's people. Guangzhou today may be the best place in the world to investigate low-end globalization because it is the metropolitan hub of Guangdong Province and the Pearl River Delta, China's industrial heartland, and is the central metropolis in the world where the goods of low-end globalization are bought and sold.

But how can low-end globalization effectively work in Guangzhou? It doesn't operate through contracts and laws, but rather on the basis of reputation and interpersonal trust. How can this be maintained cross-culturally, with people whom you don't know? To paraphrase a Somali trader, how can you trust someone who doesn't speak your language and knows only a few words of English, who doesn't share your religion, or have any religion, and who drinks and smokes as you do not? Beyond this, how does low-end globalization work within China today, a state moving by fits and starts from societies like Kenya and Nigeria in their laxity toward laws to societies like those of Western Europe, Japan, and the United States? What is the ultimate significance of low-end globalization as practiced in Guangzhou today?

This leads to a second set of questions. The Africans profiled in this book do not merely trade in Guangzhou; they live there as well, most for weeks or months, but some for years, and a few for a decade or more. Some Africans stay, legally or illegally, marrying Chinese and having families. What will happen to them in the future? China in the past sixty years has been largely monoethnic and monocultural;* but now, in its southern city of Guangzhou, it is international and multicultural. What does this mean for the long term? Might China, in fifty or a hundred years, become a truly multiethnic, multicultural society? Might we see, generations hence, China's own version of Barack Obama?

This book doesn't explore these questions for a while. In this introduction, after a brief glimpse at Guangzhou at present and in history, I depict some of the foreign neighborhoods of the city, and discuss how this book's research was conducted. In the book's second chapter, I provide portraits of a number of foreigners who have settled for the time being in Guangzhou and consider the interplay of "race," nationality, and money in their lives. I then consider, in the third chapter, African-Chinese relations in Guangzhou, focusing on Africans not only because they are a large foreign presence, but also because sub-Saharan Africans, due to their skin color, may represent the quintessence of foreignness to many Chinese. In chapter 4 I examine low-end globalization, the trade engaged in between China and the developing world, and analyze how this is practiced between the African and Arab traders in south China and their Chinese suppliers. In chapter 5 I consider overstayers, those who live illegally in Guangzhou: how do they survive and pursue profits while staying a step ahead of police? In chapter 6, I look at the role of middlemen, particularly the African logistics agents who serve as cultural ambassadors between China and their ethnic and national compatriots. In chapter 7 I examine the powerful role of religion in these traders' lives, whether Islam or Christianity, and the moral anchor that religious belief provides them in an uncertain foreign world. And finally, in chapter 8 I look at romance and relationships between Chinese and Africans, to ask, will China ever become truly multicultural? Or will the African and global presence in Guangzhou soon enough fade away?

I'm an anthropologist, but I did not write this book in the way that most anthropology books today are written. In earlier eras, anthropologists such as

*China has fifty-six minority nationalities recognized by the government, making up some 8 percent of the population. However, China remains overwhelmingly shaped by its 92 percent Han Chinese population, and so it seems legitimate to refer to China as monoethnic and monocultural.

Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead wrote books for a public audience; today almost all anthropologists, with a few notable exceptions, write for one another, in a specialized, scholarly form. While the topics their books deal with may be of wide interest, the way they are written makes them typically all but unreadable to those beyond a small group of professional anthropologists and their students. I believe that this is a great loss—after all, if engineers or surgeons write in specialized language, their findings can still help the world through the buildings they construct and the operations they perform; but if anthropologists write in specialized language, they may only be ignored. I have deliberately kept academic argumentation and citation to a minimum in this book, generally confining it to endnotes (which, if you are so inclined, I hope that you will peruse at length), and have placed the words of the different traders and entrepreneurs we spoke with at this book's front and center. I do offer my own interpretations; but the words of the people that Lin Dan, Yang Yang, and I interviewed are most important, for they are from a world that almost all readers will have never encountered. Whether this book succeeds in reaching a public audience is for readers to determine, but this is its aim—to help, in at least a small way, to democratize anthropology, and make it comprehensible and interesting to anyone who may want to read it.

Impressions of Guangzhou

When one travels to central Guangzhou by subway train or taxi from the Baiyun airport, or by high-speed rail from the Lo Wu border in Hong Kong, the first impression may be of a well-developed city with towering hotels, glittering department stores, massive highway overpasses, wide tree-lined boulevards, and clean, fast, and modern railways and subways. It appears to be a quintessential prosperous urban metropolis of the developed world.

For those who have mental images of China from an earlier era, of Mao suits and massive throngs of bicyclists, the city of Guangzhou today may come as a shock. When I first traveled to Guangzhou in the early 1980s, I saw a city of dark low-rise buildings, unworking toilets, and outdoor Ping Pong tables. I was struck by the lined faces of those I saw in the city's markets—"third-world faces," I thought then, as opposed to the softer, rounder faces of the people on the streets in Hong Kong. I traveled to Guangzhou again in the mid-1990s, and went, by chance, to one of the city's first McDonald's restaurants. I remember being told *sotto voce* in English by one employee and then by another that they longed to leave China and live in the U.S. or Europe—that dream is what led

them to McDonald's. Charlotte Ikels's book *The Return of the God of Wealth* gives a comprehensive picture of Guangzhou in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a city undergoing a massive shift from ubiquitous state control to the workings of the free market, a city in which the springing up of skyscrapers, commonplace today, was just beginning.[8] The Guangzhou of today is only intermittently visible in her book, not because of any failings on her part, but because Guangzhou has changed so precipitously in the last two decades.

This first impression of Guangzhou as a glittering modern city gives way to some extent upon gazing at the city more closely. Particularly in the neighborhoods portrayed in this book, such as Xiaobei, a different picture emerges. One still sees a lively city of bright lights and neon, but also a remarkable tableau closer to the ground: beggars seeking alms to the sound of Koranic chanting emanating from their boom boxes; Hui Muslim money changers holding wads of U.S. dollars; Arabs smoking water pipes and sipping mint tea after hours in sidewalk cafés; and perambulating Africans, outnumbering the Chinese on the street, out and about and celebrating at 2 a.m. Guangzhou, at least in these areas, appears to be a world city rather than a Chinese city. As more than one Chinese have reported to us in Xiaobei, "I feel like I'm a foreigner here!"

Ikels's 1990s portrayal of an area of Guangzhou quite close to those portrayed in this book is remarkable for another reason: no foreigners appear in her book. Guangzhou began fully opening up to foreigners only in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with Guangdong Province's economic development and China's entry into the World Trade Organization. Chinese population statistics, however incomplete they may be today, did not even include foreigners until 2010.[9] Ikels mentioned no foreigners because their number was negligible in the early 1990s; today no book purporting to fully discuss Guangzhou could neglect them.

The feeling of a foreigner newly arrived in Guangzhou very much depends on where they are from. An Iranian told us, "Comparing Tehran to Guangzhou is like comparing a 1950s car to a new Mercedes Benz." A Yemeni said, "Moving to Guangzhou is like moving from the past to the present, like coming out from a cave." Another Middle Eastern trader said, "The highways, the metro—we have no metros in Bahrain, you know? . . . And the girls here—with not much clothes on! The first day, the second day, you're surprised at short skirts, but you get used to it." A Kenyan gave a more analytical view, comparing China to his own country: "You . . . have to be impressed with Guangzhou and with China. The infrastructure, the town planning. The government can provide for a billion people, with a rail network, roads, recreational facilities, parks—things that are lacking in Africa. All the time I've stayed here, I've not experienced a single electricity

blackout. Yes, I want Kenya to become like China!" A West African trader with long-term residence in the United Kingdom had a darker view: "Africans who come to China straight from Africa see it as wonderful, and they want China to be like that. But those who have lived in Europe or the U.S. don't like China much. For me, after the United Kingdom, China was like 'the world turned upside down.' The laws aren't followed in China. Contracts are like toilet tissue."

All of this reflects China's place in the world as both a developing country less than six decades past starvation for tens of millions of its people,[10] to now the world's second largest economy, a superpower that is on many fronts competing with the United States for world supremacy. Guangzhou, as one of China's richest and most foreign large cities, exemplifies this transition.

A Brief History of Foreigners in Guangzhou

Long known as Canton, Guangzhou has been for almost two millennia a center of commerce between Chinese and foreigners, "the maritime gateway to the Chinese empire."[11] Roman merchants were reported to have come to Canton; by the Tang Dynasty, African slaves were also present,[12] as well as Arab traders.[13] In this era, of Canton's population of perhaps two hundred thousand, tens of thousands were foreigners,[14] including Persians, Malays, and Sinhalese. Trade flourished through the twelfth century but declined thereafter; in 1367, the first Ming emperor forbade all private Chinese trade with foreign countries. Trade revived with the coming of European traders, particularly Portuguese, in the early sixteenth century,[15] and the Dutch in the early seventeenth century. By the late eighteenth century, "the port was a raucous world of Portuguese, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, pidgin English, Malay, and Indian languages, peppered with words from all of Europe and Oceania."[16] Canton had again become a thoroughly international city.

The Chinese imperial government sought to keep the impact of foreigners in China to a minimum through a 1757 decree limiting all foreign trade to a zone in the city of Canton crowded with trading posts and foreigners' residences called "factories," or *Hong*, where foreigners could trade and reside during trading season in spring and autumn, spending the remaining months each year in the Portuguese colony of Macau. The Chinese merchant guild known as *Cohong* had the responsibility for arranging all customs payments, ensuring the proper behavior of the foreign crew, and handling all cargo and communications; Chinese "linguists," speaking pidgin and translating documents, were also on hand to aid in communication between the foreigners and the *Hoppo*, the superintendents

in charge for foreign trade, who "were notorious for their venality."[17] Foreigners were not allowed to learn Chinese, just as Chinese (apart from the linguists and other official figures) were not to learn foreign languages. Canton's port fees were among the highest in the world in the eighteenth century, but this did not stop foreign vessels from coming; to take just one sighting in 1784, "there were no fewer than forty-five vessels lying at anchor . . . stretching in a row three miles long."[18] Up until the mid-eighteenth century, when it was replaced by tea, silk was the dominant Chinese export.

American and British traders in Canton in the early decades of the nineteenth century left many accounts of their experiences of south China as seen from the limited perspective of their foreigners' perch in the factories. One scholar notes from such accounts that the Chinese merchant intermediaries for these foreigners were not simply venal, but were "a source of invaluable advice on many matters such as . . . the state of the market and the niceties of Chinese regulations."[19] The thirteen foreign factories were well appointed, several chronicles have stated—but one prohibition was on the presence of females, with foreign-Chinese romances, unlike today, strictly forbidden.

Hunter, in his nineteenth-century account of his life in Canton from 1825 to 1844 describes how, in American ships, "large quantities of Spanish and Mexican dollars were yearly imported to make up the deficiency arising from comparatively little other import cargo"[20]—Westerners had nothing that the Chinese wanted at anywhere near the same quantities that the West wanted Chinese products such as tea. The British answer to this trade imbalance was to import opium. The Opium War, beginning in 1839, was basically fought to force China to not enforce its opium laws, enabling Great Britain to import opium into China, creating legions of addicts and thereby helping to alter its trade imbalance vis-à-vis China.[21] This led to the founding of Hong Kong and also to the opening up of various Chinese ports to foreign trade aside from Canton. This resulted in a century of foreign occupation of China by European powers and later by the Japanese and contributed to the ongoing Chinese distrust of the Western and foreign world, and a sense of the national humiliation of China that the current Chinese government often plays upon to boost patriotic fervor.

After the second Opium War in 1857, a foreign enclave was built on Shamian Island in Canton, ceded partly to the British and partly to the French, with Western architectural designs that subsequently helped shape the city as a whole.[22] By the early twentieth century, Shanghai more than Canton emerged as the center of foreignness in China. Canton had a reputation in the first half of the twentieth century as "the epitome of Chinese xenophobia,"[23] with many intellectuals

advocating independence from foreign influence; but one commentator sees this view as mistaken, arguing for a "strong Western influence" in Cantonese popular culture.[24] But with the Communist revolution of 1949, an expulsion of the foreign did indeed take place: "as China closed its doors to the capitalist world and turned inward after 1949, there was no role for a go-between with the outside."[25] The Communist government changed the city's English name from Canton to Guangzhou. Foreigners were expelled from Guangzhou in 1950–1951, and Guangzhou's internationalism vanished. It was only in 1978 and Deng Xiaoping's reforms that the door began to be opened once more, but it really wasn't until two decades later, with the Pearl River Delta's emergence as the world's factory, that many foreigners began actively coming into Guangzhou.

This history shows most obviously that the presence of foreign traders and seekers as described in this book has a very long historical precedent. But there also are some more particular parallels between the past and today. As Vogel has noted, "Over the centuries the Cantonese have been remarkably successful in carrying on large-scale trade while keeping the personal and cultural contacts with foreigners to a bare minimum."[26] This was readily apparent in the era of the factories, with the foreign traders on their small stretch of riverbank, and their Chinese contacts taking place entirely through the *Cohong* and their linguists. It is also true today among the African and Arab traders discussed in this book—while Chinese authorities do not restrict who they can interact with, there remains a remarkable gap, with many of these traders reporting that they have no Chinese friends (except, perhaps, a girlfriend, in contrast to the foreign traders of two hundred years ago).

Another similarity concerns trade imbalance. The British in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could find no product of their manufacture that the Chinese sought, and so turned to opium. This continues today in a different form—while China relies on Africa for many of its raw materials, it supplies manufactured goods. The traders described in this book, like some of the traders described above, take their money to China and send back goods. Occasionally some African traders have remarked to us bemusedly, "Why do I have to come halfway around the world to buy mobile phones/clothing/building supplies/furniture? Why can't my own country make these things at a cheap price?" They might answer by discussing the perfidy of Western colonialism or the incompetence of their own country's government; or they might simply shrug at the strange paths of globalization, as also might the traders in Canton two hundred years before them.

Foreign Places in Guangzhou

While foreign corporate workers and professionals may go to Beijing and Shanghai when they travel to China, most traders don't travel to those cities when seeking to do business. The best city for trade, and particularly for low-end trade, is Guangzhou, accounting for about one-fourth of China's foreign trade in 2013—although trade figures are necessarily imprecise, particularly within the realm of low-end globalization.[27] Shanghai and Beijing are both great commercial cities but neither have the massive prevalence of factories that Guangdong Province has, nor do they have the large-scale presence of foreign traders. The only other city in China remotely rivalling Guangzhou as a magnet for the business of developing world traders is Yiwu, in Zhejiang Province, a seventeen-hour bus ride from Guangzhou, with a massive International Trade Mart and a reputation for being a center for trade in small goods and kitchenware. Other suppliers for the goods that traders seek are clustered in cities close to Guangzhou: Foshan, known among traders for ceramics, Dongguan for shoes, and Shenzhen for electronics. But above all is Guangzhou itself, known particularly for garments, but where virtually every product imaginable, from solar lighting to heavy equipment to furniture to electronics to shoes to school bags is available from suppliers.

Guangzhou is a vast city with many different neighborhoods, most of which foreigners never go to. There are only a very few neighborhoods where foreigners hang out; different ethnic groups in Guangzhou do business and engage in entertainment in different areas of Guangzhou.

Zhujiang New Town (珠江新城), the most upscale of these neighborhoods, is a number of miles and subway stops from the neighborhoods featured in this book; it is Guangzhou's high-end foreign business center, where many European, Japanese, and Latin Americans live and where many Chinese also come to enjoy a foreign environment. It has luxurious shopping areas and apartment complexes where foreigners in particular live; its bar area fully opened only after 2012 with the opening of a new subway station. Now the neighborhood's night scene is extraordinary in its activity; once inside its bars, it seems to be no longer China but little different from similar upscale bars throughout the developed world. One foreign denizen of the area told us, "The other day, I saw an African man coming out of a Land Rover. I'd never seen that before here—my jaw dropped. That was a first in this area!" Most Africans and South Asians don't go to Zhujiang New Town because it is so expensive. A English citizen of Nigerian Igbo

ancestry recently moved to Zhujiang New Town, he told us, because he prefers to stay in a place without many other Nigerians: "I don't understand them; they're too aggressive," he said. He would rather stay in Zhujiang New Town because he can consider himself European there rather than African. He is able to do this because he has money. Indeed, there are a few African traders, and a larger number of Arab traders, who rarely show up at the neighborhoods described below and throughout this book. They have the money to stay at five-star hotels and, because of the large size of their orders, may deal directly with factory suppliers who may wine and dine and provide them with limousine service for a week. These large-scale traders certainly exist, but aren't the primary subject of this book.

Another upscale neighborhood for foreigners is Taojin (淘金), where the resplendent Garden Hotel is located, adjacent to the Japanese Consulate, along with various bars and, in 2011–2014 anyway, an array of sex workers, some Colombian, some Central Asian, awaiting customers on walkways and street corners. There is a Latin Grill and a twenty-four-hour Starbucks nearby, a few signs in Spanish put up by freight forwarders pursuing the Latin American market, and various other freight forwarders from around the world, in offices that are typically plush and corporate. African friends who were overstayers loved the outdoor bars of Taojin, not least because the police, they reasoned, would never check anyone's ID and immigration status if they were drinking alcohol at such expensive places.

The center of foreignness in Guangzhou to be discussed in this book, the center of "low-end globalization," one subway stop away from Taojin, is Xiaobei (小北), which is Arab and African in the ethnic composition of foreigners—some living there on a long-term basis, and many more working and congregating there or staying for a few days or weeks in the many dozens of hotels in the area, large and small, expensive and extremely cheap.[28] Let me now describe the area through a quick walking tour as of fall 2013.*

When one walks down Huanshi Middle Road (环市中路)—a large thoroughfare of eight lanes, with three highway overpasses snaking above it and at some points railroad tracks as well—from Taojin toward Xiaobei, the character of the buildings and their businesses slowly changes.[29] If you are walking on the Garden Hotel side of the street, you will pass fancy hotels such as the Asia International Hotel, and then find yourself in a stretch of street that contains eight or

*While as of this writing in early 2017 the areas described here still exist, there have been significant changes over the past several years; today this area is more ordered and policed, and, to anthropologists' eyes anyway, considerably less interesting.

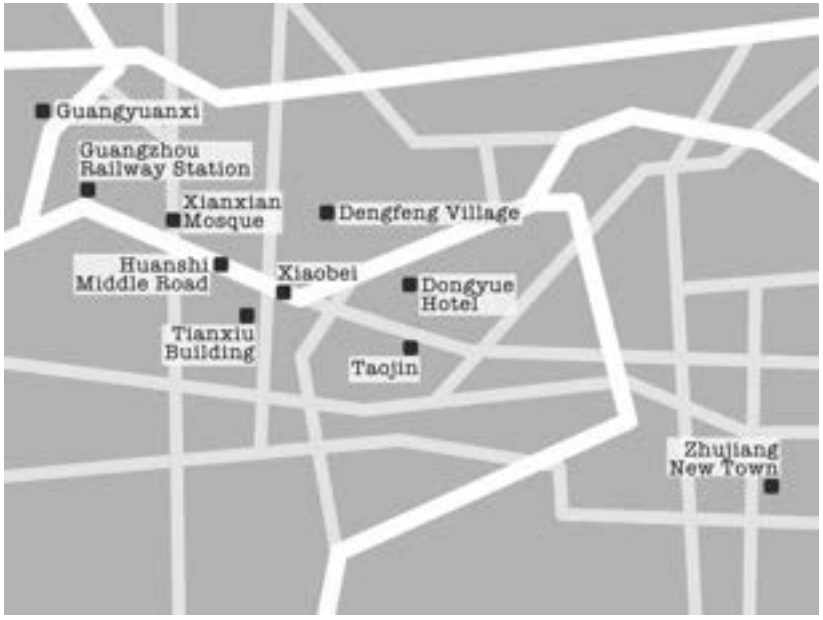

Figure 1. Map of Taojin, Xiaobei, Guangyuanxi (map by Samson Wong)

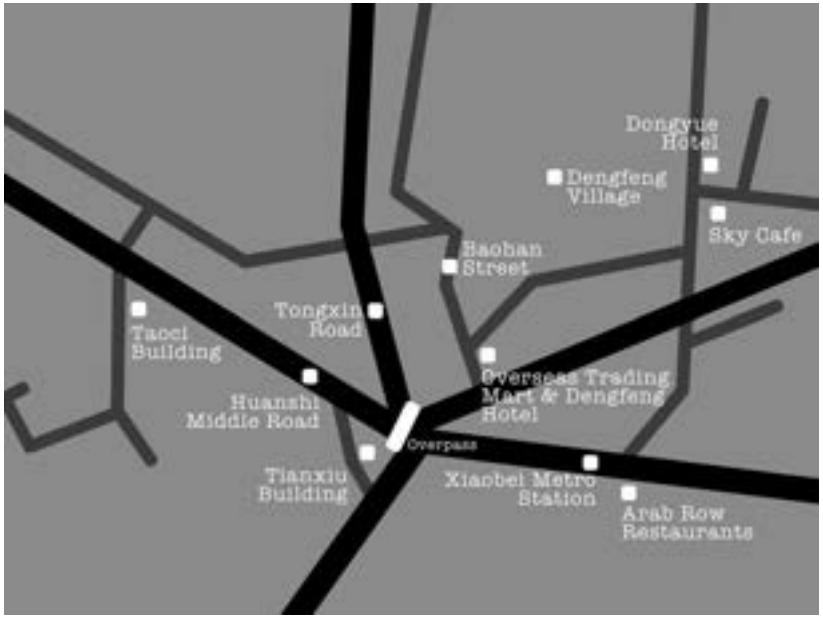

Figure 2. Map of Xiaobei (map by Samson Wong)

more Turkish and Middle Eastern restaurants with names such as Ali Baba and later on the street, in what some call "Arab Row," restaurants such as Andalus, Bosphorus, and Al Rafidien, that once you enter may seat you on resplendent couches to take your repast.

Outside the Arab restaurants are an array of vendors, both Chinese and of the Uyghur ethnic minority.* Uyghurs sell, in the evenings, slices of massive six-by-four-foot cakes; others sell animal furs, including the skins of large cats. Still other vendors, Chinese, sell stun guns; one vendor, a cute young Chinese woman, called it a "shocker," offering me numerous models and strengths for all my family and friends. Other Chinese vendors offer pest-ridding electronic devices, with mice in cages awaiting a demonstration of these devices' prowess. In the midst of this, better-dressed Chinese pass out cards in Chinese, English, and Arabic for law firms looking for clients—China visa consulting, among other matters—or handing out brochures advertising goods from construction materials to fruits for export to apartments for rent. In the middle of Arab Row there is an Indian men's club with women standing outside in slinky costumes: odd indeed on this street with its Muslim *halal* grocery stores, none of which sell alcohol, but fitting the area's ethnic mix as well as the activities of some Arab and Middle Eastern traders under cover of darkness.

This row of restaurants serves food from and employs Syrians, Jordanians, Palestinians, Yemenis, and Turks. Sub-Saharan Africans are to be found patronizing these restaurants on occasion—I've never heard of anyone being refused admission or service on the basis of ethnicity—but the ethnic division is quite apparent. When we've spoken to various proprietors of these businesses, some tell us that they don't like Africans much: "They're poor. They can't afford to come here," or, more pointedly, "They're all here illegally. And they're drug dealers!" The Africans, based on the other side of Huanshi Middle Road, say in turn, "I don't like Arabs! They're terrorists!" Much has been written about Chinese racism toward Africans, but Arab-African antipathy, as well as Indian-African antipathy, although not much mentioned in the context of Guangzhou, also definitely exists. Nonetheless, these different communities exist side by side though only rarely interacting—we've not heard of fights breaking out between them. Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Indian traders typically engage in a larger scale of busi-

*Uyghur are Turkic-speaking and Muslim. There are some ten million Uyghurs in China; most live in Xinjiang Province in western China, but thousands now live in Guangzhou. They are different in appearance from Han Chinese in Guangzhou because of their Muslim garb and their Caucasian visage.

Figure 3. "Arab Row" and its vendors (photo by Gordon Mathews)

ness than do African traders. Why some work in Xiaobei as opposed to the more upscale areas mentioned above is unclear—perhaps due to the nearby wholesale markets of garments, leather, and shoes, and perhaps also due to the nearby presence of the Xianxian Mosque (先贤清真寺), where they can go to worship (although there are other mosques in Guangzhou where they also might worship). Others have offices in areas scattered throughout Guangzhou.

Continuing our tour, you may then walk up the stairs of the overpass at the intersection of Xiaobei Road and Huanshi Middle Road, over, under, and beside train tracks and different levels of highway and expressway. You can only cross at this intersection by elevated walkway, where there is an extraordinary cavalcade of vendors and passersby of every ethnicity. On one given night, there is a woman with a large handwritten sign saying, "My son needs an operation. It costs 400,000 RMB* to cure him. Please give money!" in Chinese, English, and Arabic. There are also Chinese beggars, most prominent on sunny days but often present at night too, prone, with twisted limbs. This might be a good begging spot because of the prevalence of Islam and the importance it places on giving alms. There are also sex workers, East African, immediately recognizable by their tight-skirted business garb. There are Chinese photographers present, specializing in taking pictures of Arabs and Africans seeking to show themselves silhouetted against the Guangzhou cityscape. And there are other vendors of goods selling plastic railway sets, shirts, shoes, watches, and dolls, including a dancing Kim Jong-un. There are a number of different ethnic groups on this passageway, Chinese, Uyghur, Arab, and sub-Saharan African, with the former two groups selling and the latter two buying, but members of these different groups almost never interact except to bargain, buy, and sell. When the police come, the sellers pack up their wares in the blink of an eye and then blend into the crowd of passersby.

One set of stairs descending from this overpass leads to the Tianxiu Building (天秀大厦), a huge complex of three towers, each thirty-two stories. In its lower four floors it is a warren of shops catering to African and Arab customers, selling everything from wigs and hair extensions, jewelry (real and imitation), and electronic goods to West African-patterned fabrics, sex toys, and washing powder. The Tianxiu Building is famous as ground zero for African trade; one seeking to understand such trade could do far worse than just hanging out in the lower floors day after day watching and listening. The three of us have seen innumerable friendly or indifferent transactions, but also, in a human-hair wig store, a four-hour bargaining session over a mere 60 RMB. And we have witnessed, in a cosmetics stall, a Chinese clerk in hot pants and bra bargaining with a Middle Eastern women in black hijab, with the two exchanging not a word, but only taking turns pounding away at the calculator in negotiating their wholesale prices.[30]

*RMB, the Chinese *renminbi* or *yuan*, is a currency often referred to in this book. In 2013–2014, there were, on average, 6.15 Chinese RMB per US$1. This woman is thus seeking roughly US$65,000.

Figure 4. Interactions on Huanshi overpass (photo by Gene Parulis)

And in the Moka Café, the downstairs coffee shop, we have watched and listened to innumerable discussions and calculations in Arabic, French, Igbo, Swahili, Somali, Urdu, and very often in English, the primary language used between these different groups, over topics ranging from the fluctuations of exchange rates to the price of gemstones and sex workers to the costs and benefits for Muslims of having one, two, three, or four wives.

The higher floors of the Tianxiu Building consist of dilapidated apartments, a hotel for traders, and an array of trading companies and electronic showrooms. Block B, designated for business, contains the hotel, and is the plushest block. Blocks A and C, designated for residential purposes, are more desolate but contain a surprising number of African restaurants. Block C has a Senegalese restaurant on the twenty-ninth floor, a Tanzanian restaurant on the twenty-seventh, then, on down, a Cote d'Ivoire place, another Senegalese restaurant, and a Nigerian restaurant, as well as several Malian guesthouses. All these are unlisted but apparently do a brisk business—once inside, each is its own world. We spent a long afternoon in a Congolese restaurant, eating stew and talking with the Congolese proprietor ("I didn't like China at first because people are always busy, even on Sunday. In Kinshasa, people will relax and talk to you, but not here!") and her two Chinese cooks whom she had taught, in rudimentary Chinese, to cook Congolese food.

Outside the building once again. We've seen on its surrounding sidewalks an old Chinese man asleep on cardboard on a chilly night with several well-dressed young African traders walking past and mocking him for his poverty; and we've seen an African sex worker loudly rebuffing a customer's proffered offer: "no money, no honey!" We've seen young Africans apparently fresh from the airport walking wide-eyed, beholding this massive Chinese cityscape with its flashing billboards, and high-rises, the likes of which they have never before encountered; and we've seen Chinese apparently fresh from the train or bus station similarly wide-eyed, coming to this building to see a mass population of foreigners unlike anything they've ever beheld.

Almost adjacent to the Tianxiu Building is a place called Lounge Coffee, where the dominant language among customers is French. This is where traders from Guinea, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, Chad, Mali, and the Congo, among other countries—much of Francophone West Africa—hang out. Indeed, in the Tianxiu Building area as a whole, French is commonly spoken as well as English, but across Huanshi Middle Road, the dominant language of traders is English. As a trader from Burkina Faso said, "In terms of language, English is the only language that can get by in trade. I'll try to speak Chinese, and they'll speak English to me," and somehow they can communicate.[31] Also nearby is the Taoci Building (陶瓷大厦), which in 2005 was one of the two major buildings frequented by African traders, along with the Tianxiu Building. In 2010, there was a major crackdown on stores selling copy goods, and some two hundred Chinese shops were shut down, including many in this building. It's quiet now—just convenience stores and closed shutters. Copy goods are ubiquitous everywhere else in the area, so why this building in particular suffered such a fate is unclear. A thousand yards beyond the Taoci Building on Huanshi Middle Road is the Xianxian Mosque, which on Fridays and particularly during holy days such as Eid, is packed with thousands of worshippers: Uyghur, Arab, Pakistani and African. A few hundred yards past this is the main Guangzhou Railway Station.

One point not to be forgotten is that a block or two beyond the sites mentioned above, faces are all Chinese; the foreign world has reached its geographical bounds, although pockets of residential foreignness exist at various points around Guangzhou and its environs, from Xiatangxi (下塘西) to Nanhai (南海). Anyone who rides a bus around the city of Guangzhou will realize that foreigners in the city compose no more than a drop in the bucket of the total population—one can ride for hours without seeing a single foreigner. Maps of Guangzhou reveal the same—the areas reported on in this book are tiny specks in the vast megalopolis that is Guangzhou, larger than any American or Euro-

pean city by most measures. Foreignness is here, and is remarkable, but must not be exaggerated.

Returning to the walk, we go back to the overpass to cross Huanshi Middle Road. Directly across Huanshi Middle Road from Arab Row and kitty-corner to the Tianxiu Building, there is, after descending from the overpass, an open section of pavement where Ughyurs have set up galleries for passersby to shoot at balloons for a fee. Next to that is a Xiaobei subway station entrance, and next to that, a building with a large McDonald's restaurant: a place where young African traders are often to be found, sitting side by side with young Chinese customers, although they only very rarely talk, knowing no common language. There is some debate among Muslims as to whether McDonald's is *halal* (permissible to consume under Islamic law), but at least for those patronizing McDonald's, the debate has been decided. In this building, there is also a Yemeni restaurant, one of the few restaurants that Africans and Arabs patronize in common, and a pizza place serving alcohol to African Christians, less restricted in their daily habits than are Muslims. Within this building's arcade are shops on the lower floors catering to the Arab and African inflow of traders, selling goods ranging from stationary to pharmaceuticals to exercise machines. In one of these shops, we had discussions with a young Chinese clerk asking her why she didn't smile at her customers, but only frowned and ignored them. She earnestly asked why that was important—after all, if her African customers wanted the products of her store, they would buy them, without needing any extra enticement from her, she felt. On higher floors are a dozen or more cargo offices of African and Arab entrepreneurs, all officially fronted by Chinese, and also a private law office, African and Arab Legal Aid Service, charging far more than a government office would charge for the same services.

And then back out the building, past the shooting gallery, to walk through an underpass full of Uyghurs selling bread and roast meat and Han Chinese selling toys and watches, with a constant stream of pedestrians wandering through.

The underpass opens onto a large plaza dominated by the Overseas Trading Mart (越洋商贸城) and the New Don Franc Hotel/Deng Feng Hotel (登峰酒店). A prominent feature both of the underpass and of the plaza in 2013 was the large numbers of Uyghur sidewalk vendors appearing in the late afternoons and evenings. There were also dozens, sometimes hundreds, of Hui and Dongxiang*

*The Hui and Dongxiang are two other Muslim Chinese minority nationalities in Guangzhou; unlike the Uyghurs, from Xinjiang Province, they are predominantly from Ningxia and Gansu provinces. Hui are more "Chinese" in appearance, while Dongxiang are more Uyghur in appearance; both speak their own languages.

Figure 5. Vendors and customers in Xaobei underpass (photo by Gene Parulis)

money changers in the plaza, gathering in the late mornings to exchange dollars and RMB; we have seen money changers walk away with four-inch-thick piles of US$10 and $20 bills. Traders go to them rather than to banks not only because their rates are competitive but also because no passports need to be shown. For overstayers without legal residence or for those who don't want to deal with the bureaucracy of Chinese banks, these money changers do their business.

Uyghurs (known by Africans and Chinese alike as "Xinjiang people") are sometimes viewed as thieves by both Chinese businesspeople and African traders. A Chinese Communist Party official told me informally:

> Nobody trusts the Uyghurs—everybody thinks they're criminals. The Uyghurs fight, and they stick together. And they carry knives. But they're a minority group, and so they're not easy to control. When you buy something from the Uyghurs, they tend to cheat us Chinese people, Han people. People are afraid of them.

I had a computer stolen from my backpack (as related in chapter 4) in the underpass, and after appealing to several Uyghur food sellers, I saw the Uyghur thief brought to be beaten before my eyes. I'd hoped to get to know these Uyghurs better, but not long thereafter, on March 1, 2014, there was a horrific massacre in

Figure 6. Vendors in front of New Don Franc Hotel (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

Kunming Railway Station, with twenty-nine Chinese murdered by Uyghurs, no doubt linked to the longstanding tension between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang Province. Later, Guangzhou Railway Station itself experienced an attack by knife-wielding Uyghurs, after which there was a government crackdown and all the Uyghurs vanished from Xiaobei, to practice their trades elsewhere. I never saw most of them again.[32]

The Overseas Trading Mart is one more warren of shops for African traders linked to a hotel, the New Don Franc Hotel. It differs from the Tianxiu Building in that it is stretched more horizontally than vertically—one walks on and on over two floors, past shop after shop after shop, all catering to sub-Saharan African traders from virtually every country: we've spoken with traders from Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Rio Muni, as well as the better represented countries: Kenya, Nigeria, the Congo, and Angola. The Tianxiu Hotel could seem, with a squint, to be luxurious, but at New Don Franc Hotel there are occasional cockroaches to fend off. The complex is surrounded by streets full of Chinese merchants, with an open plaza full of vendors in front.

From this plaza runs Baohan Street (宝汉直街), a walkway that is an extraordinary cavalcade of intercultural mixing, perhaps the most international

Figure 7. Baohan Street scene (photo by Gene Parulis)

street in all of China. There are a large number of self-proclaimed Islamic restaurants, and a few "African" restaurants on the street—meaning that they serve alcohol and thus are presumably Christian rather than Muslim. Partly because of the jet lag experienced by traders newly arrived from Africa, Baohan Street comes alive only in the evening, and it seems to never end—it is full of people until

Figure 8. Baohan Street scene (photo by Gene Parulis)

close to dawn many nights, with African traders intermingling with merchants hawking their wares on the street.

However, in 2015, Baohan Street was fully repaved, with a Chinese police station prominently visible, and with street vendors, most of whom had been Uyghur, gone, although some still do business in shops rather than on the street in different nearby locations.[33] I asked a Chinese merchant running a store on Baohan Street in June 2015 how he felt about these changes. He was ambivalent:

> The street has become safer now. My phone was stolen two years ago on this street, by Xinjiang people who were pickpockets. But on the other hand, when there were vendors on the streets, there were more people here, more African customers. Because of the police crackdown, and because immigration controls have gotten stricter, there are fewer customers than before. My business isn't as good as it was.

Behind Baohan Street is what is known in China as an urban village, part of the old Deng Feng village, in a dark but perfectly safe web of passageways some eight feet wide, where directions are impossible. The walkways are set between three- and four-story buildings whose owners now rent to migrant workers because rents are comparatively cheap. Africans come here to make international phone calls from stalls set up for that purpose, and also to buy food; there are tiny shops interspersed throughout this warren. Some Africans also live here.

Once you emerge from the winding alleyways of the village, you are suddenly on a large street with a river channel in the middle; there are several Indian restaurants, as well as large hotels and trading marts. The Yueyang Trading Mall, apparently originally intended for Indians but now predominantly African, is here, as is the Dongyue Hotel, where I spent many nights, occasionally hanging out at its bar talking with Indian traders about their business and sometimes dodging sex workers (I recall one unforgettable proposition in an elevator: "Hi, I'm Julie from Kazakhstan. Wanna fuck?"). I asked an Indian man why there were now so few Indians, unlike a few months earlier, and so many Africans. I was told, "Oh, the Indians have all gone off to better hotels; when the Africans come in, the Indians leave," in an ongoing movement of ethnicity and social class. This is not unlike the shifts in population in so many American urban neighborhoods over the years and decades, but in this case those who move are temporary visitors, changing neighborhoods over weeks and months. Also in this neighborhood is the Sky Café, a bar and African restaurant with outdoor tables, which broadcast World Cup matches in 2014 at 12:00 midnight, 3:00 a.m., and

6:00 a.m. to a packed audience whenever an African team was playing. A table was broken in the café after a particularly egregious penalty was called against the Nigerian team.

Nearby Baohan Street is Tongxin Road (童心路), a tree-lined residential area with a dozen small hotels catering to traders as well as many apartment buildings that rent to Africans. In most neighborhoods in Guangzhou, foreigners can't legally register to live, but here they can, although rising rents drive many out. Stores here are interestingly mixed, with some catering to Chinese only and others making a specific pitch for African customers in their names, such as the Nairobi Hotel and the Africa Mart. The hotels for traders can all be readily ascertained, regardless of their Chinese or African names, by the loads of boxes in their lobbies awaiting transport to warehouse, airport, or seaport. Further up Tongxin Road is a nongovernmental organization specifically devoted to Africans. This area—known as "Volvo" among African traders, since there is a car repair service with the name "Volvo" prominently displayed—is also reputed to be a hangout for drug dealers.

There is one more key area, known as Sanyuanli (三元里) on the maps and in the scholarly literature and as Guangyuanxi (广园西) by the African traders who work there, at Guangyuan West Road; in this book I call it Guangyuanxi. It consists of several packed market buildings across the street from one another. It is to the north of the main Guangzhou Railway Station, and a bit more than two miles from Xiaobei. Xiaobei contains people from all over Africa, as well as the Arab world and the Middle East, with somewhat more Muslims than Christians; Guangyuanxi, on the other hand, is overwhelmingly Nigerian Igbo and Pentecostal Christian. Xiaobei is most vigorous as an evening market, but Guangyuanxi is livelier by day. There are several large trade marts in Guangyuanxi: the Tong Tong Trade Mart (通通商贸城) in a large yellow building, bookended by McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken; the Tian'en Clothing Market (天恩服装城), the Tangqi Building (唐旗外贸服装城), and the Canaan Market (迦南外贸服装城), as well as the Ying Fu Building (盈富外贸服装城), all with Nigerian Igbo traders.

When we began this research, most of the stalls in these buildings, selling clothing and shoes and some other goods, were fronted by Nigerians. But in August 2013, intensive police raids against overstayers began. Many of the Nigerians in Guangyuanxi were overstayers whose very presence was an offense. Once the police began raiding in earnest, Guangyuanxi became Chinese, with stalls run by either Chinese employees or by the girlfriends of Nigerian overstayers, who would stay away to be safe. The Africans now to be seen in Guangyuanxi are

typically either customers or legal merchants; the area once as bustlingly African as Xiaobei has now become quieter. Guangyuanxi was long a highly interesting place for research, because so many people there were overstayers, because of the strong Christian presence (with impromptu preaching in the aisles of its marts), and also because of the romantic interest between young Chinese women and Nigerian men, not nearly as apparent in Xiaobei. For anyone interested in seeing the potential birth of a multicultural China, Guangyuanxi was the best place in China to go. It was active until 2014, but is largely dormant as of this writing.

One final site is the Canton Trade Fair, a twice-yearly event taking place in a vast exhibition center in a different area of Guangzhou. The traders who go to the fair are mostly Asians and Caucasians, with few of the people one sees in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi. The big effect of the trade fair on Xiaobei in November and April is a massive increase in hotel room occupancy and prices—particularly at somewhat nicer hotels—and a huge run on restaurants. One week we went to a Turkish restaurant on Arab Row and found it empty. A week later, at the height of the fair, it was absolutely jammed, with scarcely a seat to be had. Several weeks later, it was again empty.

How This Book's Research Was Done

This book's research was done collectively, while the writing was done individually. In 2006–2009, I did research in Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong, a center of South Asians and Africans engaged in low-end globalization.[34] Some of the traders I came to know there also did business in Guangzhou, and so I accompanied them to the city. Yang Yang—known to African traders as Nicole*—began doing research among undocumented Nigerian traders in the Guangyuanxi neighborhood in 2010, supervised by me. She earned her M.Phil. degree in 2011; in March of 2012, she began accompanying me to Guangzhou on weekends to do research with the idea of eventually writing a book together. In July 2013, I received a research grant that gave me a year off from teaching in Hong Kong, enabling me to spend the 2013–2014 academic year in Guangzhou. At that time Dan Lin—known to African traders as Linessa—had begun her Ph.D. research on Chinese-African relations in Xiaobei, supervised by me; it made little sense for us to do research separately, given the fact that we were in Guang-

*Many students in Hong Kong have both Chinese names, used in a familial context, and Western given names, informally used by their social acquaintances and also in a professional context.

zhou together studying the same small population (even though her thesis topic morphed into something considerably different from the topic of this book[35]). For several months, the three of us did research together, until in the fall of 2013 Yang's work pressures in Hong Kong made it impossible for her to continue. Thereafter, Lin and I continued together until July 2014; I continued thereafter in weekend visits to Guangzhou.

This book is thus based on research Yang conducted in the summer of 2010 and continuing until the fall of 2013; research by Lin from the summer of 2012 until the summer of 2014; and research by me beginning in the spring of 2012 and continuing until the summer of 2014 (with occasional visits thereafter). This manuscript was written by me, incorporating some of Lin's field notes and a few pages of Yang's M.Phil. thesis, along with my own extensive field notes. Most of the field work upon which this book is based was conducted by at least two or sometimes all three of us. (I paid Lin for much of her research with me, but did not pay Yang other than expenses.) I have agonized over how to incorporate Lin's and Yang's names in this book. Finally, acceding to my editor's arguments, I describe their contribution not as "and" but as "with" on this book's cover, but insisted that their names be prominently featured, as well they should be. This book could not have been written without them. From now on in this book's pages, I refer to Lin Dan as Linessa and Yang Yang as Yang.

Field work among African and Arab traders in Guangzhou has been described by some researchers as particularly difficult, with interviewees showing hostility toward anthropologists of Chinese ethnicity, thinking they may be Chinese government spies or journalists seeking to denigrate Africans. This was the experience of Yang when she began her research in Guangyuanxi—she was told to go away when she tried to interview in the summer of 2010 and was able to conduct research only when one African merchant, seeing her disconsolate state, decided to help her. But an older white man and one or two young Chinese woman together seemed to diffuse tensions. Yang and I were talking outside the New Don Franc Hotel in the spring of 2013 when a cargo agent approached us, saying, "You are speaking in good English. I haven't heard good English for a long time. . . . You are anthropologists writing a book? Let me help you: I have a chapter I can add to your book." And indeed he did, although you who read will never know his name.

Adding to the draw of English is the more particular lure of young Chinese women speaking English. Both Yang and Linessa were offered proposals of marriage on numerous occasions, in part because they spoke such good English, the language of business in Guangzhou between Chinese and Africans

or Arabs. These proposals were both from African Christian men seeking first wives (or girlfriends) and African and Arab Muslim men seeking second wives; both sought Chinese women who could help them in business endeavors. Yang, Linessa, and I would sometimes sit in the Xiaobei McDonald's speaking in English; I would leave to use the restroom only to return to find Yang and Linessa surrounded by African traders who had heard them speaking English and longed to get to know them better. I would then draw these young men into conversations about their livelihood and lives. This may seem a questionable mode of anthropological research, but it worked. Yang and Linessa were saved from overt romantic advances by my presence, and I was able to talk with young African traders because of their presence.

We always carried recorders with us and always awaited the opportunity to ask the person we were talking with if we could record. When we could not, we would afterward go to an unnoticed spot to record our own conversations of what we had heard and correct each other for whatever misunderstandings we might have. My transcriptions of these recordings—some 470,000 words in all—are the basis for this book, with some additional transcriptions by Linessa. Quotations in this book derive from recordings of the people we interviewed; paraphrases derive from our subsequent recorded reconstructions of conversations.

We readily identified ourselves as anthropologists—I gave out dozens of copies of my earlier book on Hong Kong's Chungking Mansions to Guangzhou interviewees to let them know what we were doing—and so typically if we were observed recording, no problems resulted, in that the people around us either knew what we were up to or didn't care. One interviewee did once become upset when I was recording him in a restaurant: "Everyone can see this! Don't you understand that the Chinese police can see what you're doing? They're watching you." In fact, although I was several times asked for my passport to see if I was legally in Guangzhou, Chinese authorities apparently never knew or did not care that we were doing research on the sensitive topic of Africans and other foreigners in Guangzhou.

I have enormous gratitude toward the people we spoke with, who gave us so much of their time and lives. But at the same time, I believe that it is essential to remain critically detached. To paraphrase a Nigerian Christian minister at an academic conference we attended in China, "You can write about Nigerians in Guangzhou, but it has to be only positive things, not negative things." I disagree. I write with empathy about the traders we came to know, as I hope will shine through in these pages, but I also have the obligation to tell the full truth as I struggle to interpret it, wherever that may lead. My obligation is to my inter-

viewees but also to my audience, to tell interviewees' stories as fully and deeply as I can understand them.

Two final points. First, this research is focused primarily on foreigners. Although Chinese voices appear with some frequency, the locus of investigation has been foreigners' experiences of China, particularly Africans, as, in a sense, they are the epitome of foreignness in China.[36] Second, this research has been conducted so as to not feature prominent people—officials, heads of organizations, and so on. This is because there has been much popular writing on Africans and other foreigners in Guangzhou that reflects official narratives, which sometimes have minimal accuracy. To avoid this, we have stayed very close to the ground in our interviews, speaking with people who are unknown (with the exception in chapter 7 of a husband-and-wife pastor team who are identified with their permission). I thus have sought to shape an accurate portrayal of low-end globalization in Guangzhou and of African-Chinese and foreign-Chinese relations in China's most multicultural city.

TWO

Foreigners in Guangzhou

"The Chinese Dream": Stories of Eight Foreigners

In the course of researching Africans in Guangzhou over three years, we have come to know several hundred foreigners from all over the world and have heard their "Chinese dreams." Foreigners in Guangzhou experience the same array of inequalities as anywhere else in the world. While young people from the developed world may come to a place like Guangzhou seeking to find themselves, most of those from the developing world feel that they must make money to escape poverty and help their families back home. Beyond this, in an acutely racially conscious city such as Guangzhou, Americans, Europeans, and East Asians seem to have distinctly different experiences than do Africans, Arabs, and Middle Easterners. All the foreigners portrayed below make Guangzhou their temporary home. But their experiences are different, based on country of origin, social class, and skin color, as well as age and gender. The people portrayed below—whom I group into four pairs—tell us a great deal about the different varieties of foreign experience in Guangzhou today.[1]

Brad

Brad is a Canadian freelance writer in his late twenties who said, moments after Linessa and I first met him, "I came to Guangzhou so that I can reinvent myself." He was working as a reporter in Canada and was bored by the routine of covering the same stories day after day. So he packed up and came to Asia. "I was in Korea for two years, and then came to Guangzhou last year—I have a lot more opportunities here than I had in Canada to write new things, to branch out." He spoke about the mix of foreigners living in his Zhujiang New Town apartment building:

> In my building alone, there are Brazilians, Turks, Russians, Colombians, all kinds of people. I have a Russian friend who ships iPhone cases. He just started a new company doing this, sending them to Siberia. My roommate sends stuff to Germany; he's been here six years. My other roommate, who has only been here since late last year, just finished shipping diet pills to Colombia; now he's doing shampoo—yes, he deals in copy goods. My two roommates talk to each other about how to ship goods. Another friend, from Argentina, imports wine for the Chinese market. And I have a friend from Belgium whose company pays him to stay here—something about appliances or cutlery. No, visas aren't a problem—although we have to go to Hong Kong from time to time to renew our visas.
>
> I came to China knowing nobody here. I got a job as a teacher, but later quit to try to become a journalist. Now I work on various websites and write pieces on topics much broader and more interesting than what I could do in Canada. I'd like to learn Chinese. But among the foreigners here, they always find ways to communicate, whether it's Google Translate or friends. Some of my friends are in teaching, some manage bars, and many are in trade. Teaching English is the default job anyone can get because they're white and have a bachelor's degree, but people go into business if they can. Many people are like me: we are here to make our careers and find ourselves.

Brad epitomizes the spirit of young people seeking a better life not just at home but across the globe: what Brad is saying about Guangzhou as a place of reinvention might have been heard about Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Seoul in recent decades. In his neighborhood of Zhujiang New Town, and in his very apartment building, there are young foreigners from all over the world engaged in business, exporting or importing goods. Some of the goods his friends export are copies of

global branded goods, he says; this is illegal, but is generally not a problem in the context of China today. But there are many other career paths as well, especially for those who are educated and from affluent countries. The young foreigners Brad refers to are white—there are no Africans, South Asians, or Chinese among the people he mentions. And as whites, there is always the job of English teacher, Brad tells us, if their business endeavors or professional dreams come to nothing, a position they can find less on the basis of their linguistic knowledge than their skin color, apparently. In such a cultural swirl, English enables Brad to pursue his dream as a reporter without knowing any Chinese—and to work on finding himself, wherever that may take him.

Kingsley

Kingsley is a Nigerian overstayer living illegally in Guangzhou, with a shop in a large mall in Guangyuanxi. He needs to always be on the lookout for police, who could arrest him at any time. We met in his office on Sunday, when police are generally absent.

> My life in China is like a gazelle on a nature program on Discovery Channel, drinking from a water hole with crocodiles waiting to grab it. On the street or workplace or anywhere you take a nap, you may wake up with your hands cuffed together. . . . I was born in eastern Nigeria, after the Biafra War, in the 1970s. Igbos are the ethnic group I belong to; I am an Igbo man. In the Biafra War, Igbos fought for their independence; after that war, every Igbo was seen as a rebel by the Nigerian state and was not forgiven. That's why you see all the Igbos trying to make their lives outside Nigeria. I went to Libya in the 1990s; I wanted to go to Italy, but I couldn't. I have applied for a visa to Sweden, Belgium, Germany, and the UK, but I couldn't get in. I never wanted to come to China. China was the last resort.
>
> I learned my business skills from being an apprentice in Nigeria for a place selling auto parts. Now I'm into computer accessories. My first trip to China was in 2007; I began to live here in 2009, becoming an overstayer. I have a Chinese girlfriend, but I don't know what will happen to us. The best thing about China is that everyone works. Chinese women don't want to just stay at home and take money from men, like many Nigerian women. They'll help you.
>
> I do logistics here, sending shipments back for customers: I can do that without showing my passport. I also trade. It's tough: I've been cheated in China. Someone pays the money for goods of grade A quality, but the Chinese

> factories have sent grade B or C. They know that once the goods are in Africa, they can't be returned to China. . . . Last week, I lost a package in the airport in Lagos. The customs opened my package and took away two iPads and some jewelry, which my customers sent had from China. It's corruption. Nigeria is full of it. . . . Still, I don't want to stay in China, except to make money. As soon as I can get enough money, I will go home.

Although they are both foreigners in Guangzhou, Kingsley and Brad have almost no chance of ever meeting. They live in different neighborhoods and in different worlds—although they both benefit from the roaring boom that makes Guangzhou what it is today. Brad can seek opportunities freely, but Kingsley, like many of the Nigerian Igbos in Guangyuanxi, must always look over his shoulder, doing all he can to remain invisible to the police. He does his business by telephone and through his Chinese girlfriend, who, unlike him, can show her face without fear of arrest. It is a testament to his business skill that despite the great handicap of always having to hide, he can make enough money to continue on in China, but the danger of getting cheated, both in China and in Nigeria, is always present, all the more so because as an overstayer he is immobile and cannot cross borders. Kingsley, like many Igbos, has always longed to leave Nigeria, even for China, his last choice, he said; while Brad was driven by restlessness to leave Canada, Kingsley was driven by desperation to leave Nigeria, it seems. He feels he can't return home without enough money to show his success; but if he is caught by police—snapped up like the gazelles taken by crocodiles on the Discovery Channel—his return home will happen regardless. Brad and Kingsley represent two poles of life for foreigners in Guangzhou, that of an adventurer from the developed world seeking to find himself, and an economically straitened trader from the developing world seeking to get a financial foothold in life.

Scott

Scott is in his mid-twenties, running an educational consulting company in Guangzhou.

> I came here from Boston in 2008. Hundreds of banks had failed in the U.S. My family has a chain of stores, but business wasn't good. The 2008 Chinese Olympic Games came, and I thought it might be a good opportunity for me to leave America and start something new. I was eighteen years old. First I worked at a school for several years. Then I found the courage to start my own educa-

tional business. With the one-child policy, Chinese parents really want their kids to have a good education. The Chinese route to get to college is difficult because of the exam system, so many parents feel they should try the American route, sending their kids to a university in the U.S.

I've been studying Chinese intensively. If you don't have *guanxi* (关系) [connections], it's really hard to get by in China, even at the United States Consulate. There are local workers and there are foreign workers. The local workers know what's going on. For visa applications, you're going to wait in the line for months if you don't have any special relationship. At universities too, I need connections. I don't have an undergraduate degree from the U.S. I think if I'd had an opportunity to go to a good school when I was eighteen, I'd have done well, but I didn't have that opportunity. If I didn't leave America in 2008, I'd be working in a gas station now. I recently got into Ph.D. programs at several top Chinese universities because of *guanxi*, because I've made their universities so much money. I hope that the Ph.D. on my name card looks good.

Sometimes I get really annoyed by Chinese people. Some are just impatient. I tell them it will take three weeks, but they don't wait, they call me every day. If it's one person who annoys me, I have two hundred other people lined up to go. I can't tell you I can get you into this university; sometimes I have to say, "The school rejected you." I tell every single one of them, "If you live in America, you need to adapt to American culture. You're not better than anyone else because you're rich." They've been caged in this Chinese education system for so long that when they go to America they just go to have fun. If I get a notice from the school that the student hasn't been to class, of course I have to call the parents. I call the student too, and ask, "Are you sick? No. Are you depressed? No. What are you doing?" "I just hang out at the casino. . . ." I've got about 10 percent of these irresponsible kids; 90 percent are excellent.

China is a country with laws. But the cops, they don't do anything here. If you stay away from them, they don't come near you. I drive, but I don't have a license. They don't care. I was stopped by police once when I was driving. They asked me for a license. I said I didn't have one. They said, "OK, go." I speak to them in English, of course, which they don't understand. I was arrested once, when I had a little too much to drink. The taxi just kept driving in circles, and I fell asleep, and refused to pay the meter. The taxi driver started to call fifteen taxi drivers to come—they were trying to kill us! I locked my friend and me in the taxi cab and then called the cops. The cops arrested everyone. We said we were going to call the U.S. Consulate. The police chief said, "I don't want any of this happening," and we were let free.

Scott, like Brad, has reinvented himself in this new locale. Scott sends Chinese students to universities in his home country without advertising the fact that he has not graduated from a university himself. His connections in China will help him solve this problem by enabling him to earn a Ph.D. Unlike Brad, he is working hard to study Chinese; in his efforts to understand China, he is in this sense a "model foreigner," unlike the great majority of foreigners in this book, who remain generally ignorant of their host country. He benefits in being American not just in being able to serve as a liaison for American universities, but also in his freedom from police molestation. He drives without a license and contests taxi fares with impunity, because the police, seeing an English-speaking, white foreigner, simply do not want to tangle with him: he is largely free to do as he wants in China, thanks to the language he speaks and his possession of an American passport. The United States may perhaps be China's greatest opponent on the world stage, but Americans, as Scott's example shows, are still treated with kid gloves.

Omar

Omar is in his thirties, from a conservative Arab country. The first time Linessa and I met him, he was drinking tea and smoking a water pipe. At that time, he asked Linessa to be his second wife, although he was completely unfazed when she declined. The second time we met him, we switched to beer. As he told us:

> I started to drink beer in Guangzhou. I came here to learn new things! Back home, they will never know I drink beer. You're always hoping Allah will forgive you. I hope He will forgive me for drinking beer! Human beings have a weak heart. But the red line, don't cross it. If you steal money, this is not allowed. Don't take what is not for you. Yes, I pray five times a day. Prayer is what we live for. At home, you have many mosques to pray in, and you have family. Here there are only a few mosques, and I don't have a family. There I cannot find beer, not like here; there you cannot find a lady, but here you always can.
>
> Business in China is different from the rest of the world. It's easy to find sourcers to produce goods—you can just e-mail. Old people in China can't speak English, but young people can. Guangzhou is a safe city—no mafia, no criminals—you can keep your money here with no problem. But Chinese factories make problems with customers. Every time you find trouble. You order goods—yes, copies, of course!—and they change the price, the material,

because they give a low price to keep the customer. When they get the deposit—20 percent—they may play with you, because they've got you: you can't back out. . . . Some people from my hometown have gotten married to Chinese. When you come in, you're blind—if you get married to a Chinese, more business! But that's scary. One thing I hate about Chinese girls is that they love money so much. I've never in my life seen people who love money like this!

I've been in China for two years, in and out. My main business is getting commissions from customers from the Middle East—my income is from customer commissions. I need only ten big customers. Some merchants from my country come here with US$1 million, $2 million. Some come here with just US$10,000, $20,000—they spend $5,000 for their hotel and food, and spend the rest on goods. They can make $20,000 profit every two or three months. They buy something for 3.5 and sell it at 9 or 10—yes, 300 percent profit. I charge 5 percent as commission—that's really very little money for all the profit they make. China needs people like me to come, but the rich countries, America, Europe, Australia, they don't want people like me! They never give me a visa. I think I'll stay three years here, then go back. But the Chinese government may decide for me, if they don't renew my visa! I had to travel to Malaysia to get my China visa renewed. When I come back to Guangzhou, I feel like I'm coming back to my hometown. China is opening up now. It's not Communism, like before. Here, business is better than anywhere! But maybe not in a few years: the exchange rate's getting worse, and factory wages are getting higher. Maybe traders will go to India or Bangladesh or Vietnam instead.

Scott and Omar are both engaged in exporting from China, with the American exporting Chinese students to the United States and the Arab exporting Chinese goods to the Middle East. Both seem to be able to make considerable profit from these activities. They also can do things in China that they could not do back home, whether Scott's being invited to get a Ph.D. or Omar's drinking beer and enjoying life in other ways that would not be possible in the conservative Muslim society from which he comes. Omar sees Guangzhou as a place to try new things, such as beer, and perhaps find a second wife or girlfriend as well. He, like Kingsley, sees China as a place where being cheated in business is extremely likely. Islam remains his bedrock. He put great effort into trying to convert me to Islam once, when he had had too much to drink; I have occasionally been proselytized by Muslims, but only once when they're drunk! He sees Guangzhou as home, even though he has been in the city only two years; but he is at the mercy of factors like exchange rates that may eventually lead him from

China to the next hot spot for developing world trade. Scott and Omar have both found perches from which to profitably lead their lives in Guangzhou; but Scott, as an American, can ignore the law in China, whereas Omar is taken advantage of by factories because the law does not apply; and he must always worry about his visa status. Guangzhou may feel like home, but he may not be allowed to live there, depending on the whims of the Chinese authorities.

Emi

Linessa and I met Emi and her friends in a restaurant by chance and talked with her for much of an evening. She is from Ethiopia and was in Guangzhou primarily for the Canton Trade Fair. She in her late thirties, has a husband who is an IT professional, and a young son back in Addis Ababa, where she owns several boutiques that sell women's fashions.

> I am in Guangzhou for six days; before coming to China I was in Bangkok checking goods. I've been to Guangzhou a number of times, but I don't like China so much. The possibility of getting cheated in business is greater here. In Bangkok, people may cheat you over money, but here in China, the quality of the goods you're given will be low. I have a university degree in business and have been trained in Europe, but Chinese keep seeing people like me as poor Africans, so they don't make good-quality things for us. It's not only China that's bad. I had the same experience in Dubai, with the Arab merchant telling me, "You don't want to buy these expensive things," assuming that because I'm a woman, I don't understand business, and assuming, like the Chinese, that Africans are poor. But I know what I'm doing.
>
> I get clothing I like in Bangkok and other places and get copies made here under my own label. No one back home cares that they're copies. Yes, my customers are middle class; they are affluent. In Ethiopia, people all think that "made in China" means bad quality, but I'm trying to educate my customers that some things made in China are very good, as long as you can pay for them. Ethiopia is a wonderful country—you should visit us! Yes, the government does some bad things, but it's a very safe place. I want to make profits, but really, traveling is more important to me than making money—it's great to travel and see the world. I'm not staying in Xiaobei, but in a bigger hotel. It's really nice but it's too expensive!

Female traders in Guangzhou tend to come and go; overstayers and long-term residents are overwhelmingly male. Emi is typical of female traders in the

brevity of her stay, but is atypical in her social class. She is of the African upper class: she can afford to travel for fun more than profit, and seeks to have quality Chinese goods made for her middle-class clientele. Her Chinese suppliers don't understand this, just as her suppliers in Dubai don't understand, apparently because of male chauvinism but also because of their mistaken assumption that all Africans seek only substandard goods. The Chinese goods that Emi supplies her Ethiopian customers are of high quality—even if they are copies—and thus can educate her affluent customers that quality goods can be made in China. She is, in effect, an ambassador for Chinese goods in Ethiopia, as her Chinese suppliers are not.

Hans

Hans is a Western European businessman who has been in Asia since 1974. I met him as the only European in a café full of Nigerians watching a World Cup match at 3 a.m.; Linessa and I subsequently met him at an outdoor tea shop in 36-degree-centigrade heat. He viewed us with suspicion and eventually allowed us to speak with him only if we promised to distribute his name cards to all the companies he felt we no doubt knew. "I can do mergers and acquisitions, supplying, technological specifications," he said. But he apparently has no office. He sought to work only with large companies, he told us: "A twenty-five-man company? That's the lower edge of what I work with." He proffers consultation services for European companies that seek to enter the Chinese market.

He once had a Thai common-law wife and son; they died in the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, he told us. "That's why I moved to China—to get away from all that. I saw the tsunami on television when I was in Europe. We lived on the beach—I knew they had been washed away in a single wave." The tale he told sounded too dramatic, but the way he told it made us think that it may indeed be true. He wants to remarry: "I don't want to die alone. But I don't want to marry a Chinese girl, because they cannot be trusted—the family pushes them. There are moral blinders that Westerners have in terms of love, but Chinese girls don't have that. Yes, my dream is to get married and have children again. I'm sixty years old."

Hans lives in the poorest part of Xiaobei, in Deng Feng village. I asked him, "Do you live where you live because you're poor, or because you're eccentric?" He replied, "Actually, I'm both." Although he lives in an African area, he has a distinct dislike for Africans: "The difference between white people and Africans is that white people have moral values, and Africans don't. They even lie to their own brothers." He also expressed considerable dislike for young Chinese. Before

he met us, he had a meeting with a Chinese man whose name card indicated that he had a Ph.D. Hans asked for his CV and found that it was written in an amateurish way in Chinese—Hans told him when they met, "No big company that may want to hire us would take you seriously." He told us, "The Chinese companies will hire a young Chinese who's come back from a Western university: the person will be so arrogant, without knowing anything at all!" Hans very much wants to find a Chinese partner who knows technology and has language skills. His own value in business is shaky, he acknowledged. What value does he bring when European companies can hire a Chinese person instead? How would large-scale companies ever find someone like him, working without an office? But he keeps trying.

We never knew how much to believe of what Hans told us, but we sensed that his story is largely as he has described it. He has fallen off the map. There was a time when Europeans who knew Asia well were in demand as corporate consultants. But that era, in an age when hundreds of thousands of Chinese have come back to China with foreign university degrees in hand, has ended. Hans is not an alcoholic, as are some developed world expatriates in China whom we know; nor is he a sex addict, like some of the others. But his time is past, unless he becomes very lucky, in a foreign world in which he is aging and penniless.

Emi and Hans show that, for a foreigner in Guangzhou, nationality, skin color, and gender are hardly determinative: Emi is rich and educated despite being a black woman from one of the world's poorest countries, while Hans is poor and down-and-out despite being a white man from one of the world's richest countries. Emi is discriminated against as an African woman in Guangzhou, while Hans has no doubt benefited in his life from being a European man; but nonetheless, Emi is of the global elite and has a bright present and future, while Hans, despite his bluster otherwise, appears to be on a downward spiral. Nationality, skin color, and gender matter, but in their lives, global social class and the variations in how individual lives unfold are most important. Had it not been for the Indian Ocean tsunami, Hans might now be living a life of contentment as a family man on a beach in Thailand, but his life did not turn out that way.

Vivian

Vivian is a striking young Kenyan woman who paid a broker to get her into China for a promised job of teacher that never materialized.

> The way I came to China, we were told we were coming here to work—I paid US$3,500. From Beijing, for three days we took a train to some godforsaken

> place—for three days, no shower, no food. They had promised us teaching jobs for 7,500 RMB a month. There never was a teaching job. I can't criticize anyone who is doing prostitution, because maybe they came in the same way I came into China, but they didn't have someone sending money from home, like my sister did for me to tide me over. That Kenyan woman who got me into this: I could choke her! She's been in and out of jail in Kenya. But she maybe knows a policeman or something; she's never in jail for long. For me, it turned out OK: I found a job in Guangzhou; I work as a receptionist for a freight forwarding company. Where do I want to be living five years from now? In a condo in Miami. Or in a beach house in Thailand.

She had earlier been married to a European man; after their breakup, she feared he would come to Kenya to stalk her, so she fled to China. I asked her about her job prospects in the future, and she spoke of the possibility of becoming a sex worker:

> Have I ever considered working professionally? Well, you don't know where to get those big men to pay you hefty. The women on the street, on a good night, make 200 RMB; after expenses at the end of the month, you just have 3,000 RMB. That's pocket change. You may be able to make more—it depends on class, on where you do your hunting. The high-end clubs are only for white people and for Chinese—I tried going to a club, and was told that they do not allow black people inside because of their reputation, unless I know someone.
>
> To get into the business, I have to dress right. I already have fake hair and fake nails. All I need to do is add more makeup and maybe dress more scantily. Sex workers can't stop—the money is too sweet! It's like when you steal candy—you have to continue. I myself couldn't discipline myself to save money, and then stop—the money is too good. I'd rather take a plane and go back home. In this building, maybe 99 percent think I am a prostitute. But I sit in the office working every freaking day! I don't have a life here—I go home from the office and just switch on the TV. I've been to the clubs here just twice. I want to marry! But boys in church are not good. They're liars! They're just hiding behind church!

Several weeks after this conversation, Linessa and I took Vivian to a bar in Zhujiang New Town, and a man at a nearby table, a wealthy Chinese company owner, inquired about her. Vivian was shy, hamstrung by the language barrier, but after an hour of Linessa's translations, she was showing him her modeling pictures, and the owner offered to feature her in his company's catalogue. (Later,

we found that she did not become a corporate model but was working at a European restaurant.)

The vast majority of African women in Guangzhou are traders, like Emi. But when there is a lopsided population of men, as is the case for foreign traders, inevitably there is a market for sex workers. In Guangzhou, sex workers are most often Chinese, sometimes from Central Asia, but very often, if they are African, they are from Uganda and Kenya, sometimes trafficked and sometimes coerced, but also often working independently. Vivian, by her account, is not a sex worker; but simply because she is beautiful, she is looked at as if she were by many of the men around her. Her sights are set higher—she seeks a long-term relationship with a rich man. She had a European husband but—as she once told us—she found him too old, too boring, and too working-class for her tastes. She came to China to flee him and was duped by the promises made to her by her agent, but has righted herself; now she is looking for more. Despite being hesitant because of the linguistic and cultural differences she encounters in China, she is remarkably clear-headed. She may very well succeed in her life ambitions, not simply to marry a rich husband, but more, to leave behind her life in a developing country to live somewhere richer and easier.

Mack

Mack is twenty-five, an IT professional from Iran whom I met on the subway as another foreigner in Guangzhou. As he later described his life to us:

> Iran is an Islamic country; I left partly because I didn't want to pray so much. In the Iranian army, you have to go pray at 5:00 in the morning. They would force me to go into the army if I went back—they'd arrest me at the airport and take my passport. Before I got my working visa here, a lawyer suggested that I find a Chinese lady and pay her 3,000 RMB a month for a fake marriage; but that will only get a three-month visa. Now I have a working visa, renewable every year. But no, thirty years from now, I don't want to be living in China. For a career it may be OK but not to live. I tried to get to Canada, but they rejected me.
>
> Here, when people first see me, they assume that I'm American or European. When they find out I'm from Iran, their attitudes sometimes change, they slowly move away from me. Yes, there are many people in Iran like me, people who are atheist and hate their government, but they have no way to resist. . . . With my Chinese girlfriend I can get along well because I don't have

to worry about things like eating pork. There are no real cultural difficulties with her, except she wants children and I don't. We talk in English. . . . My bag was stolen and I had nothing; I then stayed with a very religious Muslim here from the Middle East who was very nice to me, but he pushed me to go to the mosque two or three times. I thought, "You're going to kill me! Please, stop!" Right now, in the company that I work for, people are from various Arab countries. They say *as-salaam-alaikum* ["Peace be upon you," a standard Muslim greeting] and I won't reply—I'll just say "hello." To me, what they are referring to doesn't exist! Some people ask, "Who is this guy? What does he do?" But yes, because I'm the IT person, I control things there.

I've never had any trouble with Chinese police. The police here are nationalists; they'll support Chinese. But in my interactions with them, they've helped me a lot. Maybe they think I look white. People don't believe I'm from Iran. . . . I love Guangzhou because of all my friends from all over the world. All these people coming here looking to do something! This is a place of opportunity!

Mack, with his easy manner, can blend in easily with a wide range of foreigners in Guangzhou, except for Muslims, whom he detests. He once showed a very devout East African Muslim friend of mine pictures of the Western social club to which he belongs, with its members dressing up in women's outfits for the sake of charity. "I visited one of the club members at his company, where he's an executive, and called him by his club name, 'Hey Mr. Condom!' He said, 'Shut your mouth!' Yes, this is why I love Guangzhou so much!" My East African Muslim friend was aghast: "Why would an adult man dress up in women's clothing and call people such childish names?" But for Mack, how he lives makes perfect sense in rising up in the global class hierarchy, although he is not fully conscious of this: he is already mistaken for an American or European, and seems, in effect, to be becoming one. Shortly after our interviews, he quit his job at the Middle Eastern company to join a European-based import-export firm as their IT professional.

Vivian and Mack may appear in many respects to be different: a young African woman blessed or cursed by beauty and a young Middle Eastern atheist who fled his Islamic home. But they are similar in their efforts to transcend their countries of origin. Vivian seeks to do this through a calculated display of her beauty. Mack seeks to do this through his computer skills, which are in demand, but also through his manner—he has learned to act in Western way, as in the joking around at his social club, infantile to a pious Muslim and yet also

a marker of more relaxed and affluent social norms. Like Vivian, Mack is on his way up in the world.

Rich Foreigner, Poor Foreigner

The eight people profiled above form an arbitrary group: I could have included any of the two hundred or so people we have interviewed and recorded. I chose these eight for two specific reasons. First, what they told us is so fascinating—these people were remarkably interesting to talk to, both because of the circumstances of their lives, and also because of their openness, whether they were telling us of tragedies that befell them such as the Indian Ocean tsunami wiping out one's family, trying to convert me to Islam while self-consciously drunk, gracefully answering questions about whether or not one was a sex worker, or frankly admitting matters ranging from dealing in copy goods to lacking university training. Most people are not so honest about their lives, but these people were. I have disguised them by changing not only names, but in some cases nationality, age, and numerous other indicators, while leaving the essential elements of their stories, in order to protect them from any possible identification.

Second, these people all illustrate in different ways the global north-south divide—developed world–developing world, as I henceforth call it—and how it may be bridged. These people are all multidimensional in their own right, of course, but we can also consider them more schematically. Our first two pairs, Brad and Kingsley and Scott and Omar, each consist of a North American near the top of the global heap and an African or Middle Easterner near the bottom—not necessarily in terms of the money they make but in terms of where they are from and the social resources they command. Our third pair, Emi and Hans, reverses the racial hierarchy, with Emi, an African woman, near the top of the global heap, and Hans, a European man, sliding to the bottom. Our fourth pair, Vivian and Mack, consists of two people from the developing world rising up in the global hierarchy through their own efforts. We can depict these eight people on a personal developed world–developing world diagram, with Brad, Scott, and Emi near the top, Kingsley and Omar near the bottom, Mack and Vivian climbing upward, and Hans tumbling downward. This is not a reflection on any of these people in and of themselves, certainly not of how much money they have (Omar is probably considerably richer than Brad, for example). It is rather an indication of where they fit within larger global patterns. Let me discuss how this is the case for each of these sets of people.

Brad and Scott are young people from the developed world seeking to make

money and build their reputation in China through their services—whether writing journalism for foreigners or getting Chinese young people into American universities. China has enabled them to build their careers as they could not have at home: Scott says that had he remained in America he might be pumping gas now. These people are North Americans pursuing their dreams in a place that, because of economics, is now more receptive than the United States or Canada might be. Emi, from the African upper class, is closer in her background to Brad and Scott than she is to Kingsley and Omar and is engaged in bringing quality Chinese goods to her well-off clientele, if only the Chinese suppliers would oblige by not cheating her. She is of the developing world, but her background is that of a well-educated global citizen: the developed world–developing world divide is not only between countries but also within countries.

Kingsley and Omar are also seeking to make their money and reputations in China, but in a different way: they are engaged in sending knockoff and copy goods back to their home regions of Africa and the Middle East. This kind of business is not necessarily confined to the developing world—some of Brad's friends are also engaged in it—but because developing world citizens are more likely to seek cheap goods, as Omar tells us, and because China, unlike the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan, makes many such goods, this is the business that the vast majority of developing world citizens in Guangzhou are engaged in, even Emi, whose relatively expensive, high-quality goods are nonetheless copies.* Mack and Vivian are apparently moving from the developing world to the developed world their prospects. Mack, who fled Islam and induction into the Iranian army, is an IT specialist; Vivian's beauty leads the Africans around her to think that she is a prostitute, but it also opens up opportunities for her.† Both seem to know exactly what they are doing in their lives. Hans has been moving from the developed world to the developing world in his prospects; he has fallen into his current situation, as a self-styled European expert on Asia, through personal tragedy as well as through living beyond his time.

*Copy goods, in my usage of these terms, are exact models of the original goods, including brand logos; knockoffs are copies of the design of original goods, but with different logos, or no logos.

†Some readers may object that the two women portrayed here both owe their positions to men and male attention, whether Emi's husband or Vivian's beauty. This objection is understandable, but this is what we've seen among the African women we've come to know in Guangzhou. There are strong independent African women in Guangzhou, several of whom appear later in this book, but given prevalent African gender norms, they represent a distinct minority.

This is a rather stark portrayal: these people are more complex human beings than this categorization can address. I set this forth only to show that the developed world–developing world divide is absolutely inescapable in Guangzhou, among the different foreigners in the city. All are within this mix and are, however inchoately, conscious of this mix.

Race and Money

One way the developed–developing world divide works is through "race." There is considerable racism in the accounts set forth above. Teaching is the default job of white people in Guangzhou, Brad tells us. Mack conjectures that police treat him nicely because they think he's white, while Vivian is not allowed into high-end clubs because she's black, and Emi has difficulty persuading her suppliers to provide her with upscale goods because she is a black African. Hans states that "white people have moral values, and Africans don't."

There are many scholarly and popular depictions of Chinese racism toward Africans, ranging from discussions of premodern Chinese attitudes toward Africans[2] to articles exploring the prejudice shown toward African students in the 1960s through 1980s, the recent rise of virulent cyber-discourse against Africans in China, and speculations as to whether China's increasing openness to the world will lead to a lessening of racism.[3] We have certainly witnessed racism, ranging from ignorance (we saw, to our astonishment, an old Chinese man in a Guangzhou restaurant begin to vigorously rub the skin of an African man to see if his pigmentation would come off) to apparent insults (*hākgwái* [Cantonese] or *heigui* [Mandarin], 黑鬼—"black devil"—is often shouted at Africans, although sometimes more as a casual term of reference than an overt term of derision) and racial stereotyping ("Africans are uncivilized and stink!" we've heard some Chinese shopkeepers say). On the other hand, those Africans who appear educated or wealthy do not tend to report racism. An East African doctor in training who speaks excellent Mandarin Chinese said:

> I'm dealing only with Chinese patients. They ask me lots of questions, but they mostly trust me. Some people, who only speak Cantonese and not Mandarin,* it's difficult to communicate with them—we can't understand each other. I do physical examinations on them—it's normal—they typically accept it,

*Mandarin is the national language of China, while Cantonese is the native language of most people in Guangdong Province and Hong Kong. The two languages are mutually unintelligible, roughly equivalent to Spanish versus Portuguese.

> although maybe not old people. Only 5 percent of patients don't accept me as their doctor.

This man, quite dark skinned, experienced some rejection because he is black and foreign, but not much; if blackness were the primary problem, then he and others like him would not be as successful as they are in their professional lives within a Chinese context. Indeed, it is unclear how much racism is primarily a matter of one's skin color and how much it is a matter of wealth and nationality. To what extent are Africans discriminated against in China because they have black skin, and to what extent are they discriminated against because their black skin signifies that they are from a poor country and continent? Our impression is that although both are important, the latter is at least as significant and perhaps more so than the former.

The preceding accounts show the importance of the nation one claims as home, and the sometimes desperate efforts to "get to a better country." Kingsley tried to get to European countries but they would not grant him a visa: "I never wanted to come to China. China was the last resort." Mack and Omar also were rejected, with Omar saying that "the rich countries, America, Europe, Australia, they don't want people like me!" Mack tells us that Chinese move away from him once they realize that he is Iranian, but he still benefits in daily life because "people think I'm American." Scott, when he is in trouble, speaks English or threatens to call the U.S. Consulate, and the police back off. Race, the color of your skin, and nationality, the color of your passport, interweave in multiple ways. One West African trader told us:

> When you walk into a shop or factory, they see you as a customer and want business from you. But when you're outside, walking around on the streets, that's when you experience racism. Yes, it's a reality that Chinese suppliers are more likely to give defective goods to African traders than, say, Latin American traders. Absolutely. But coming from a wealthy country plays more of a role than race. Africans with American or European passports—they don't get taken to the police station and fined! You're freed on the spot, because the police know that these people can make some noise, they can make a complaint. But if you're holding an African country's passport, then no one will question them for holding you.

The ubiquitous assumption is that white people are rich and black people are poor. This is a gross overgeneralization: while white Hans is penniless, black Emi is affluent. But this assumption powerfully shapes how Chinese relate to

foreigners of different nationalities and ethnicities. The two cognitive poles of foreigners for Chinese in Guangzhou, and for most other foreigners as well, are whites—Americans and Europeans—who are generally treated well, and blacks—Africans—who are often looked down upon. East Asians such as Japanese and Koreans are, in effect, honorary whites, although this is complicated because of recent historical antipathies (the Chinese government never loses an opportunity to criticize Japan for its wartime atrocities), and because Japanese and Koreans are basically indistinguishable from Chinese until they speak. South Asians are viewed as being somewhat closer to the black pole; Middle Easterners and Latin Americans are seen as somewhat closer to the white pole.

Because of these attitudes, many nationalities and ethnicities in Guangzhou that look "white," including Arabs, Turks, Iranians, and Latin Americans, may benefit from their skin color and their perceived closeness to Americans and Europeans. This was apparent in Mack's account. Another Middle Eastern trader insisted that he was Spanish, until, after I spoke to him in Spanish, it became apparent that he couldn't speak the language; when asked why he did this, he implied that he was treated better when people thought he was Spanish. A Mexican trader and musician in China told me:

> In this world, if you're white, you're going to have a good job. In Guangzhou now, there are Ukrainians and Belarussians doing a "monkey show"—if you're white and slim, you can pretend to be a singer, a musician, a model. You don't have to know how to do these things! You can see they don't know what they're doing. It's only how you look.

A Kenyan logistics agent told us this story:

> A Thai lady used to work in freight forwarding. To attract customers, she found a Caucasian tourist who had lost his money and passport and was just hanging around Bangkok. She said, "I will employ you and pay you a decent salary. All you have to do is wear a nice suit and use your laptop surfing the Internet and sit in my office, coming with me to business meetings." In no time at all, the lady got very good business!

He urged me, jokingly, to do the same in his office.

The racial hierarchy I have just described is hardly confined to China, but is global, as much recent scholarship delineates, in terms of both individual perceptions and the global hierarchy of development, which plays out in terms of race.[4]

Among those we interviewed, skin color and nationality are particularly complicated among Africans who have citizenship in the developed world but come to China to send back goods to the country of their birth. We met a Canadian trader from Sudan: he went to Canada as a refugee in 1994 and worked there for ten years, but found the taxes too high. He comes to China to ship ready-made children's clothes back to Sudan. And we met a Somali trader from northern Virginia. His brothers and sisters are in the U.S., one a teacher, the other an accountant. But he would rather be in Eastleigh, the Somali area of Nairobi, because of the money that can be made there. These traders have chosen to forsake their developed world careers, both because more money can be made as a trader and also because of a sense of wanting to contribute to the home country they had earlier fled.

Ethnic and racial discrimination is more than a matter of black and white—every group has someone they can malign. I mentioned in the last chapter the ethnic slurs occasionally uttered by Arabs against Africans and Africans against Arabs in Xiaobei. Among Africans, the group most feared was Nigerians, particularly Igbos, who are a large percentage of the Africans in Guangzhou, and many of whom live illegally in China. An East African said, "No, not all Nigerians are dangerous. But most of them are. Anything they can do to get money, they'll do it. Good, bad, it's not their problem. Yes, it's the Igbos I'm talking about. I'm afraid of them!" A West African trader said, "I love Nigerian movies. But it's normal to hate the Nigerians! If you're close to them, they'll get you killed!" We attended a Nigerian Igbo church and found its members to be wonderful people, but the negative attitude of most other Africans was overwhelming. In response, Igbos said to us, "We Igbos are the Jews of Africa. Other Africans are envious of us because we're so good at making money!"

The largest racial picture in Guangzhou is that of Chinese as opposed to foreigners—both internal foreigners like the Uyghurs, who are Chinese citizens but not ethnic Han Chinese, and external foreigners, who are divided into white and black.[5] The white-black divide is ubiquitous but is apparently less a matter of skin color alone than perceived wealth, which is why Arabs and Middle Easterners may pretend to be European. Within every different group, there are gradations: a Westerner might have not the slightest idea of who is Igbo and who is Somali among the Africans she beholds, but Africans certainly know and make much of this distinction, and many others, such as French speakers versus English speakers, and Muslims versus Christians, just as Chinese may know who is Uyghur versus who is Hui and who is Han Chinese. Distinctions and discriminations are everywhere.

Foreign Communities: Japanese and Nigerians

I discussed in the last chapter the different neighborhoods in which various foreign ethnic groups live or work. Zhujiang New Town is primarily European and East Asian, while Xiaobei, a less glitzy neighborhood, is primarily African, Arab, and South Asian, and Nigerian Igbos do business in Guangyuanxi. These different ethnic neighborhoods exist not because of overt racial discrimination but because of money—a hotel room in Zhujiang New Town will typically cost 1,000 RMB or more while a hotel room in Xiaobei will cost less than 200 RMB. These different neighborhoods are ghettos of foreignness in Guangzhou at different socioeconomic levels. This hierarchy is readily apparent within a city (and nation) that does not fully accept foreignness and divides foreigners into a wealthy Euro-American and East Asian category and a less-wealthy, developing world category. This, in effect, relegates these groups to different neighborhoods according to their socioeconomic status, leaving the rest of Guangzhou for the Chinese.

But the question is not only one of neighborhoods but also of the experiences of different ethnicities and nationalities within a global social hierarchy. Consider, for example, Japanese in Guangzhou as compared to Nigerians. The Japanese are perhaps the largest developed world community of foreigners in the city, with some six thousand to ten thousand in all.[6] Many are male business expatriates sent by Japanese automobile, electronic, and other companies who come with their wives and children. There are Japanese schools for children and an organization for women. Japanese in Guangzhou who are part of these large organizations can basically live as if they were in Japan. They have ready access to Japanese media and Japanese organizations, keeping them fully informed of all that is going on in Japan, China, and, to an extent, Guangzhou. If Japanese corporate workers have any visa problems or other matters requiring interactions with Chinese authorities of various sorts, Chinese employees can help take care of these problems.

The biggest complaint that Japanese have about Guangzhou is air pollution, Reijiro Aoyama, a researcher of Japanese in Guangzhou, has told me. Political tensions between China and Japan have virtually no effect on these employees' lives, or on any of the Japanese in Guangzhou—although in a politically tense period, rumors may emerge that Japanese companies will send all their staff back to Japan. Japanese companies have their own corporate VPN* and so Chinese

*VPNs (virtual private networks) circumvent Chinese government control over the Internet. These may work through corporations or universities (we used the VPN of the

restrictions on the Internet have little impact; Japanese corporate employees typically live in their own foreign compound. These Japanese corporate employees may have no Chinese friends, although they may have many Chinese subordinates. It's often these men's wives who may be more interested in Chinese culture, studying the Chinese language or cultural pursuits. Corporate employees live in Guangzhou two to five years before rotating out and returning to Japan. Aside from these "mainstream Japanese," there are also many Japanese who are not corporate employee—students in universities studying Chinese, or young people, women more than men, who have come to Guangzhou on their own to work or teach or study—but the largest group of Japanese, and the most influential, are the corporate employees and their families.

Comparing Japanese to Nigerians—probably the largest group of developing world foreigners in Guangzhou—one immediate contrast stands out. Almost none of the Nigerians who come to Guangzhou work for a large company. They come on their own, seeking their fortunes in trade. Many of these Nigerians are young Igbo men who were given cash by their employers after completing their apprenticeship in Nigeria. With this cash, they obtained a Chinese visa and flew to China to try their luck, first working as an employee of a shop, and then perhaps starting a shop of their own. Visas are extremely difficult for Nigerians to renew, and so, as we saw with Kingsley, many become overstayers. The most important social institution tying Nigerian Igbos together are the churches they go to, which may meet multiple times a week, providing a moral compass. If the Japanese almost never need to be concerned about police, Nigerian Igbo overstayers always need to be concerned.

Another key difference between these Nigerians and Japanese is that while the latter may never deal much with Chinese in their daily lives, protected as they are by the corporation, the former must deal with Chinese, both where they work and where they live, on a daily basis. Thus, Nigerians, along with all Africans and Arabs and other developing world people, are in this sense the leaders of internationalization in Guangzhou. There have been very few children born of Japanese-Chinese intermarriages in Guangzhou, but apparently hundreds born of Nigerian-Chinese relations. Many of the Japanese only speak Japanese, and few foreigners speak much Chinese. But the Nigerians, along with most Africans and Arabs, tend to communicate with Chinese in English. Chinese in Guang-

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Chinese University of Hong Kong to freely access the Internet throughout our research), or also by individuals who pay computer specialists to provide them, as many foreigners as well as Chinese do in Guangzhou.

zhou may prefer "white" over "black"—a Guangzhou professor related in an unguarded moment that when Guangzhou opened up in the 1990s, "we expected white people to come, not black people" and the developed world over the developing world as those who come to the city. As a Chinese college student told us, "Guangzhou people want this city to be international. Yes, they like white people, Japanese people, Korean people. But they also know that being international includes poor people as well as rich people." And it may be the poor foreigners more than the rich foreigners who are truly internationalizing the city.

The Power of Rumor

It's difficult for most foreigners to understand what's going on in Guangzhou. This is largely because mass media is in Chinese, and English-language reporting—let alone reporting in French, Arabic, or other languages—is sparse. It is also because even in Chinese much is reported in ways that may seem suspect or isn't reported at all. The Internet is readily available, and information can be gotten through computer or mobile phone. Those who have a VPN, available for 100 RMB per year or so from numerous vendors, can evade Chinese censorship of various news outlets and of Facebook and can find out what is happening around the world.* But knowing what is going on in Guangzhou is more difficult. Here too there is a considerable difference between rich and poor, developed and developing world citizens. The Japanese in their corporations can find out what is going on; but the Nigerians and other Africans—indeed, anyone who is not part of a well-connected organization or who does not know Chinese—cannot. For them, rumor becomes highly important as a source of possible knowledge.[7]

Africans and Arab traders typically use WeChat, a social networking app for mobile phones in China, as their primary means of getting information, however accurate or inaccurate. There was an incident at the Golden Dragon Li Hua Hotel in August 2013 (discussed in chapter 5) in which Chinese police burst in on Nigerian heroin dealers, arresting some and perhaps leading to the deaths of others. News spread almost instantaneously through WeChat after this incident, and photographs of Igbo men captured by the police or sprawled inertly on the ground were widely circulated. Some Nigerians and other Africans we spoke with said that three people had died—that was initially the most accepted figure—while others said six, others eight, others twenty, and still others only one or none.

*This was the case in 2013–2014, but in the years since, VPNs have become less effective in Guangzhou, apparently because of the increasing vigilance of Chinese censors.

The Chinese mass media reported on the event the next day, celebrating police diligence and mentioning no deaths. So how many people died? Who knows?

There were numerous other rumors as well that we heard in the course of our time in Guangzhou. Is it true that Chinese police sometimes cancel on the spot the visas of someone whose looks or manner they don't like? Is it true that two Tanzanian sex workers were murdered in Guangzhou by a Nigerian man who had their kidneys removed to sell on the black market? Is it true that the Kenyan presidential election of 2013 was rigged by false ballots printed in Guangzhou? Is it true that in late 2015, a Chinese woman, enraged at her Ghanaian boyfriend's secret dating of other women, hired Chinese toughs to immobilize him and then cut off his penis, leading to his death? The first and last of these rumors are apparently true, from all we can ascertain, while the middle two are apparently false. But the point is that, in the absence of any reliable truth, African and Arab traders—and indeed all the foreigners in Guangzhou who are not members of foreign corporations—are to some extent at the mercy of online rumors and hearsay. Rumors play an essential role in their lives.

The importance of rumor and innuendo was the case not just in terms of Guangzhou, but current events as a whole. When the Somali terrorist group Al-Shabaab raided the northern coast of Kenya in June 2014, killing forty-eight people, one of our Kenyan acquaintances realized that his son lived exactly in the location of these killings. We had arranged to interview him during dinner, but he held off for an hour, dialing his son over and over again until he finally was able to ascertain that he was unharmed. For days thereafter, our discussions with him and other Kenyan traders was over why these attacks took place; we heard a remarkable range of theories, from blaming the Kenyatta regime in Kenya to the British and Americans, and particularly the CIA for providing the money to pay Al-Shabaab for committing such acts. "We can't tell who exactly is doing this—anybody with money and interests can hire mercenaries to do anything in Kenya," we were told. Certainly social media contributed to conspiracy theories—anything presented on WeChat or Weibo must be real, some of our African acquaintances seemed to believe. But beyond this, when so little of mass media reporting in China or in one's home country seems believable, one grasps at whatever one can in pursuit of information.

In events in Guangzhou and around the world, those most able to piece together the most plausible versions of why things proceeded as they did were at least somewhat more likely to survive and prosper, simply because they could ascertain what to be afraid of and what could be ignored among all the myriad threats they faced. The ability to evaluate rumors—whether of Chinese police

crackdowns, the waxing or waning of strict enforcement at customs in China or back home, or presidential elections and terrorist attacks—is an important skill upon which survival and prosperity to some extent may hinge. How do you judge how true a given rumor may be? The well-connected and savvy foreigner will be better at this than the poorly connected and naïve foreigner, and this may make all the difference in how one's sojourn in China turns out.[8]

Foreigners' Attitudes toward China and Chinese

The single most important practical issue for most foreigners in China is that of the Chinese visa and how it can be renewed. This was not an issue for everyone—overseas employees of corporations generally had no problems with visas, with their visas renewed more or less automatically. But for those working independently, whether as traders or teachers or in any other capacity, the possibility of having one's visa denied was an ongoing threat. Even North Americans such as Brad and Scott could not ignore their visa's expiration date, but this was magnitudes more of a concern for those from developing world countries, mostly because Chinese immigration authorities were generally far stricter in issuing visas for those from poorer countries.

Being always worried about one's visa, or more, becoming an overstayer, creates a love-hate relationship with China for many foreigners in Guangzhou. This is most obvious for those who have romantic relations with Chinese citizens, most often a foreign man and a Chinese woman. He may love her and at least by extension the country from which she comes, but—at least if they have not been married for a long time—that country wishes only for him to leave and will jail him if he does not. As always, developed- and developing-world differences are readily apparent. Several young European and American men we know wondered whether their girlfriends—"she's more beautiful than anyone I could ever find at home," one confided—liked them for themselves or for their passport, and the passport that their girlfriends might gain were they to get married. Developing world men often sought visas themselves—Mack was advised by his lawyer to consider a paper marriage to help his visa status. Although marriage to a Chinese woman will not guarantee a long-term visa, many of the foreigners we interviewed felt that it might help persuade immigration officials to view their visa situations in a favorable light.

Beyond romantic relations, this love-hate relationship may be true for a wide range of people who develop affection for the Chinese world they are in but cannot remain. Omar said, "When I come back to Guangzhou, I feel like I'm

coming back to my hometown. . . . But the Chinese government may decide for me [how long I can stay] if they don't give me a visa!" He could develop a deep knowledge and affection for his "foreign hometown," but only if he were allowed to stay for an extended period. The government's logic is clear: they would prefer foreigners, particularly foreigners from the developing world, to come to China briefly to buy the goods they seek to export and then to go home. In this they are no different from developed countries, from the U.S. to Japan, in seeking to keep foreigners from poorer places at arm's length. But some foreigners, because they have fallen in love with a particular person or have fallen in love with China as a place, or because they simply want to continue making money in China, do not want to leave. The Chinese logic in this argument is fortified by China's general monoethnicity—foreigners are foreign, in the standard Chinese view, and so China cannot be where they ultimately belong. This is the single biggest paradox for some foreigners in China: they live in and love a land that cannot become their home.

We asked every foreigner we met if they had Chinese friends. A few said they did, typically those who had lived in China for a long time and spoke fluent Chinese. Mostly the answer was that they did not. Employees of large foreign corporations typically had Chinese subordinates, but these did not translate into friendships outside work. As for traders, they could never be sure if the friendship that some Chinese middlemen or suppliers offered was real or was instead born of the desire to make a profit off them—to get them to drop their guard so that they could be more easily taken advantage of. As a long-term West African resident of Guangzhou said, "For Chinese, money is more important than human relations. That's not for me. No, I don't have Chinese friends. Well, I have one—I invited him out for a meal once. No, I don't speak Chinese. I should. I'm in a society where I take for granted that someone speaks English. I'm in their country, so I should learn Chinese!" Very few foreigners we met spoke Chinese, even if they had lived in China for many years. A few did—but even they were bemused by the notion of having Chinese friends and said that they did not; they might have Chinese lovers, but not friends.

Underlying all of these personal matters, almost all of the foreigners in Guangzhou saw the society in which they were living as the world's future. Indeed, this is why most of the people portrayed in this chapter are in Guangzhou: they hope to get for themselves their very small slice of the Chinese dream. The Chinese dream is their dream as well, even if China can never be their home.

THREE

African-Chinese Relations

African Traders in Guangzhou: An Overview

This chapter focuses on African traders in Guangzhou, but the designation "African" is problematic. Some of the Arabs in Guangzhou are from Egypt or Libya or Algeria; they too are African, even if few people in Guangzhou ever refer to them as such. By African, I specifically mean sub-Saharan African, or, to speak most directly, black African; this is what "African" typically means when used in Guangzhou. I focus on them not only because they are the largest group among developing world traders in the city but also because they are so conspicuous within the Chinese racial hierarchy. There is not much marking Africans in common other than their skin color—Somalis are about as different from Nigerian Igbos as Japanese are from Indians, and "African" is just as confusing a designation as "Asian"—but because this differentiation is so commonly used among Chinese and Africans themselves, I use it here. In some cases, the people we interviewed did not want to be identified by country, and so I often use the broader designation East African, Central African, or West African as a label.

African immigration to places such as Paris, New York, and Italy has been depicted in a number of insightful ethnographies.[1] Be-

cause Africa as a continent remains poorer than many other parts of the world, despite its economic growth in recent years, many of its more entrepreneurial souls from such countries as Nigeria have sought to make a better life elsewhere, in Europe or the United States, or, more recently, China. Much scholarly and popular attention has been paid to Chinese in Africa,[2] but until recently little had been written about Africans in China. This has changed over the past few years; I've heard academic comments such as, "There are more social scientists wandering around Xiaobei than anywhere else on earth!" This has resulted in a number of interesting articles,[3] but curiously, there have been almost no books, and none providing a full ethnographic portrait of Africans and other foreigners in Guangzhou.[4]

The number of Africans in Guangzhou, just as the number of foreigners in general in the city, is unclear. Newspapers have provided wildly inflated figures of the numbers of Africans in Guangzhou. The *Guangzhou Daily* in 2007 claimed that there were two hundred thousand, while Hong Kong's *Apple Daily* claimed in 2014 that there were three hundred thousand;[5] but the Guangzhou government, when pressed to come up with an exact number of Africans at the time of the Ebola crisis in fall 2014, arrived at an official number of sixteen thousand;[6] a 2015 estimate, also in *Guangzhou Daily*, is of no more than five thousand Africans remaining longer than six months (as most African traders do not).[7] Castillo, in the most thorough scholarly assessment I have yet seen, estimates ten thousand, which may be a bit severe in its effort to counter the inflated numbers earlier set forth.[8] My own rough estimate would put the number at somewhere between ten thousand and twenty thousand at the time of our research. Numbers considerably vary during the course of a year. African traders will typically be present in Guangzhou from March through December. During the long Chinese New Year holiday in January or February, Chinese factories and stores will be closed and Africans, unless they are long-term residents of Guangzhou or are too poor to travel, will be back in Africa.

African traders began coming in the late 1990s and early 2000s to the Tianxiu Building, and also to Guangyuanxi, which had a thriving Nigerian community as early as 2002. One key factor in bringing Africans to Guangzhou was the Asian financial crisis of 1998, which led many African traders to leave Bangkok and Jakarta to come to Guangzhou instead.[9] A Chinese merchant discussing the Nigerian area in Guangyuanxi said that the peak years for Africans in Guangzhou were 2007–2009. At that time, Africans could easily apply for a visa through agencies, which helped them get connections with factories or export compa-

nies. Some long-term observers say that there has been a decline of the number of Africans in Guangzhou in recent years, with visas becoming more difficult to obtain. However, Li, Ma, and Xue estimated in 2009 an African population in Guangzhou of fifteen thousand to twenty thousand, roughly the same number I estimate as of this writing.[10] There is always the claim made by traders that they will leave as soon as their business becomes no longer sufficiently lucrative. As one Kenyan trader said, echoing the words of Omar in the last chapter, "Within five years, African traders will all be gone, off in search of cheaper goods. The wave is over." Others dispute this; another Kenyan trader said, "China will become the economic center [of the world], and Africans like us will be part of this for a long, long time."

We estimate that the number of female traders in Guangzhou might be 30 percent of the total at any given time. Hyunh has criticized earlier analyses of African traders in Guangzhou for focusing primarily on male traders and ignoring women.[11] While this critique has some validity, the largest reason female traders are not much analyzed is that most don't stay—they typically return to Africa from China within ten to fourteen days after arriving, we have found, and thus are more difficult to come to know. A number of the hotels I stayed at in Xiaobei had primarily female traders as their occupants; their male counterparts would often rent apartments instead. Female traders come and buy and return to Africa, while males sometimes stay for sourcing and purchasing, eventually become business handlers and middlemen if they can. Because they typically stay briefly, African female traders may be more susceptible to exploitation, both by Chinese suppliers and by African middlemen. They may not be physically present in China long enough to inspect the goods they have ordered. And because they stay briefly and are thus harder to come to know, female traders are underrepresented in this book.

In terms of language, as earlier noted, English is the lingua franca of traders, who only rarely can speak more than a few words of Chinese. This situation contributes to a linguistic gap among African traders and entrepreneurs. In our experience, native speakers or those who have been educated in English tend not to learn Chinese, while nonnative speakers of English often make a great effort to learn Chinese. As a Ugandan female trader told us, "I get in arguments with Chinese and insist that they speak English. English is the universal language, Chinese is not. I tell them, 'You guys should go to school!'" On the other hand, some Africans who speak French know that most Chinese don't speak French, so they learn Chinese to be able to communicate—the best Chinese speakers

we know are Congolese. Perhaps not coincidentally, Congolese, more than Nigerians or other national groups, seem to have a relatively positive impression of China, judging from the people we have talked with.

An essential question, but one difficult to get a straight answer to, is how much money African traders make in Guangzhou. There is wide variation among traders, and many don't keep detailed accounts, investing their profits back into their next shipment of goods; thus they themselves might not know exactly how much money they make in a given year. Beyond this, there is an understandable tendency either to overstate your earnings to make yourself seem more successful than you really are, or to understate your earnings to avoid the envy of other traders. A Kenyan cargo agent said, "The traders I deal with are making US$50,000 per year. One Somali guy was telling me that if you can't save $30,000 a year from trade here, you're wasting your time. Go back home." Another East African said, "The profit you can make in China depends on how much money you have to invest initially. If you have US$100,000 and work very hard, maybe after one year you can earn US$50,000 or $40,000. My brother has been working in America for seventeen years. And now, he cannot spare even US$1,000." On the other hand, a Nigerian overstayer maintained that the average trader he knows is making US$15,000–$20,000 a year. This may be the case, since the traders he knows are illegally in Guangzhou, which no doubt drives down their profits because they must continuously stay on the lookout for police and lie low. And even this figure may be too high, since many of these traders lack the money to go home (discussed in chapter 5).

These profits are large, multiples of the per capita income of the countries from which traders come. Almost all the Africans we met in Guangzhou came from middle-class backgrounds—we knew of no one who left Africa penniless and became wealthy through Chinese trade, simply because the flight to China is far more expensive than most people living in Africa could ever afford; many are also well educated, with university degrees.[12] We have been told by a young West African that at least some young African men in Guangzhou from wealthy families have been sent to Guangzhou by their parents as punishment. "Back in Africa, they don't want to go to school, they spend US$1,000 in a bar on drinks in one night. Their parents get angry, and send them to China because it's easy to get a visa, and many parents imagine that life in China is tough. In China, you have to depend on yourself and grow up!" Typically, the African traders who come to Guangzhou are experienced enough to know what they are doing in trade, although they face the shock of coming to what to them is a mysterious and foreign place.

All African traders need to worry about their visas, but there is an array of other concerns as well. A Kenyan logistics agent, well known for the advice he dispensed to his countrymen and women about what to expect in China, recounted the following:

> If Africans seek to come to China, here is what I tell them. For the first-timers, there's always the fear of the unknown—they all insist that you pick them up at the airport. Some of them will come with Kenyan currency, thinking it's international. You can't change Kenyan currency in China! Even now we have somebody like that—he came with 300,000 Kenyan shillings [US$3,500]. I've asked another customer to bring additional U.S. dollars to exchange with him; I've linked two customers to solve the problem. This is basic knowledge you need to have—come with U.S. dollars.
>
> Another thing you need to tell them is that they have to declare the money they're coming in with. If you don't, and if you don't end up using up all the money, you cannot leave China with anything more than US$5,000. If it's detected in scanning, they'll ask you to pay 10 percent of that money, because there's no evidence that you came with that money to China if you haven't declared it on entry. There are no documents asking you to declare at the airport—you just have to know this. Especially on the Hong Kong–China border—someone who wants to leave from Baiyun [Guangzhou International Airport] and finds flights are fully booked and wants to get one in Hong Kong; without thinking, he carries his money and goes to the border. That's a problem: You can't go out without paying that 10 percent. . . .
>
> Also, you have to be careful about fake money. This has happened to more than ten customers of mine. An innocent African woman takes a cab to the airport, and gives the driver 100 RMB—the money she gives him is real, but he replaces it with fake money. The woman panics—she might give the driver all her 100RMB bills, and he declares it fake and gives her back other bills. Really he's taking real money and giving her fake money. Also, an African books a hotel, but it has many branches—you have to know the road where the hotel is, and carry the hotel landline number. . . . Another thing you have to tell them is that if they want anything made, they need to come with a sample. Not just a photograph, but a sample with the actual material. Otherwise they'll make something for you that you don't want. . . . China: the biggest problems—a lot of language miscommunication, rogue taxis, and fake money. If the government can rein in those three, things will be smooth here. These things contribute to the bitterness against the Chinese in Africa. When you con a person

> here in China, giving her fake money, when she goes back to Africa and sees a Chinese selling mobile phones, she will be angry at him.

There is also the question of what you should do if a Chinese behaves in an unusual or racist way toward you. I mentioned last chapter the African man who was set upon by an elderly Chinese rubbing his skin. The African man's immediate reaction was to become angry at this gross violation of his personal space; but our African friend, seated nearby, immediately told him, "Look, that guy's a peasant. He's never seen a black person before. Don't get angry; just smile and shoo him away." Very occasionally, Chinese will hold their noses when an African approaches; this is deeply offensive, but becoming angry is almost never a good strategy, our African confidants maintained. At its most extreme, anger can get a trader jailed, as when a frustrated West African trader, believing he was being cheated, took a swing at a Chinese merchant and was recorded on the company CCTV; the police were called and they took him away.

The greatest threat faced by African traders in China is that of being cheated in business dealings. Within the Chinese world in general there is sometimes a degree of casual racism, which can only be shrugged off; but within the world of business, there may be a concerted effort to take advantage of the African buyer, who may be seen as an innocent in a foreign land, ripe for the taking. Chinese suppliers and merchants wield considerably more power than do African traders in their relationships, and the latter are to a very significant extent at the mercy of the former. I obtained a remarkably frank document, "Introduction & Recommendations to Doing Business in China, 2013 version," put out by the Rwanda Development Board, China Office, that states:

> Doing business in China is a challenging task by all accounts, for different reasons:
> - First, the fact that it is a foreign Asian country . . .
> - Second, the low level or lack of rule of law (such as contract enforcement) . . .
> - Third, the fact that Chinese companies know that they can get away with unlawful behavior . . .[13]

"Doing business in China is like dancing on the head of a snake," one wealthy Central African businessman told us. "You know you're going to get cheated; it's just a matter of when, how, and how much. The Chinese company you're dealing with can screw you over at any time, and you have no recourse." However, those African entrepreneurs who have been in China for a while, even if they don't

speak Chinese, develop a degree of savvy in countering this. This may consist in only dealing with Chinese companies and suppliers that they have come to know well, but it may also include other more innovative measures. A Kenyan middleman spoke of the pen recorder he used to sometimes surreptitiously record the Chinese employees in his office:

> I used to have staff, when you quarrel with a Chinese supplier, she would turn the other way, help the supplier instead of helping me. They start talking in Chinese—but I have this pen recorder that they don't know about. I ask a friend who knows good Chinese to translate later: he tells me they were saying, "This guy is black and this isn't his country. Keep his money!" You can't have a person like that in your office! But the Chinese I work with now—I recorded them, and took it back and was told, "Oh, these people are fighting for you!"

Many African merchants, logistics agents, and middlemen have their own offices in which they hire Chinese to deal with the Chinese-language negotiations and paperwork that arise. But because of language and cultural barriers, there is the question of how much these employees can be trusted. This man's recordings are devious but to him are absolutely necessary—how else can he ascertain whether the Chinese in his office are aligning with him or with their fellow Chinese?

One critical difference between African traders and Chinese merchants is that virtually all the African traders we have met are profoundly religious, whether Christian or Muslim, while most Chinese are not. This leads many African traders to distrust Chinese merchants. Related to this is the fact that Chinese may drink, smoke, or offer sexual favors to celebrate a business deal. As a West African Muslim trader said:

> When I do business with Chinese, they like inviting me to dinner. And they like to give me alcohol at dinner. I don't drink. But my Chinese friend said that I had to drink—it's a way Chinese show friendliness. If I refused the alcohol, I refused his kindness, and our partnership would be broken. I also had to accept their cigarettes and smoke. I don't understand this. But I have to follow the Chinese way sometimes.

An East African Muslim trader elaborated:

> I can't get into Chinese business deeply because Chinese will invite you for seafood, then take you for drinks, then take you for massage, and then there

> will be a "happy ending"—they'll ask you to go with a girl. If you tell them, "I don't drink, and I don't want to go with a girl," they will think, "This guy's hiding something." I am sure that if I were drinking and womanizing, I could do better business with the Chinese.

Of course many Muslim men drink and womanize, just as many Chinese men do not: the "happy ending" described by this trader is much more the exception than the rule in Chinese business dealings. But for pious Muslims, Chinese social customs were a significant barrier to business, requiring them to forsake either religion or profit.

Business Deception and Cheating

It is rare to find an African trader who says he has never been cheated by Chinese suppliers. As one Nigerian businessperson proclaimed, the key principle for Chinese is "cheat the foreigner but don't kill him. They have the right to cheat the foreigner and collect his money, do anything that is unlawful. But they should not kill the foreigner." He was being only partly facetious. The cheating that African traders like this man refer to is typically not of the type that would "kill" him—render him penniless—but rather siphon off more money; but this siphoning is common and difficult to counter. The African trader may be as cautious as possible, moving deliberately in business negotiations, checking goods with a very fine eye, and inspecting every carton sent, and still be cheated.

Both African buyers and Chinese suppliers, as well as the Chinese and African middlemen working between them, cheat on occasion: both seek to make more money, and some will do so without any moral compunction if they can get away with it. But the opportunities for cheating are more available to Chinese suppliers than to African buyers. African buyers can cheat only by getting credit from their Chinese suppliers and then never repaying. The Chinese side has many more opportunities to cheat, from start to finish. The Chinese side can cheat by representing oneself to an African buyer as a Chinese factory supplier instead of a middleman buying from the factory, and then selling the factory goods at an extra charge; taking the deposit of African buyers for an order of products—often 30 percent of the overall price—and vanishing; supplying goods that are inferior in quality to those of the initial sample (this is by far the most common form of cheating); and manufacturing thousands or tens of thousands more goods than the buyer ordered of a given sample, and then selling directly to retail customers in Africa, undercutting the customer's business.

Chinese merchants know how easy it is to exploit these foreigners in their country. African traders may not learn the language and culture of China, but at very least they may learn to practice caution. One Nigerian Igbo trader said:

> I come to China to buy farming machinery, and it involves a leap of faith. You give them the money and just wait. . . . When you get off the plane, Chinese middlemen instantly appear. They come with you for three days, doing absolutely everything for you. They even come into the bathroom and wipe your rear end for you! They do everything until they get your deposit—then they vanish.

He is speaking figuratively about the bathroom, presumably, but everything else he says seems accurate. If the African trader can avoid losing his deposit to an unscrupulous vanishing middleman and can make it to a factory more or less unscathed, there are other perils to be negotiated. The Nigerian trader quoted above told me that the single most important lesson he'd learned from doing business in China was to never use a Chinese factory's interpreter. The factory interpreter will receive 10 percent of the profits if the sale is made, and so has every incentive to disguise the realities of the transaction. It is far better to hire your own interpreter, he said, from among the university students to be found in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi who are happy to engage in this lucrative freelance job.

The most common way that companies cheat traders is to send goods of a different or lesser quality than what was ordered. Sometimes traders buy ready-made goods from suppliers, but often a trader will take a sample to a factory and ask them to manufacture the item. The factory may then make goods of lesser quality, and if the trader's visa expires and she returns to Africa, she is stuck. As another Nigerian Igbo trader told us, "You say that you want black and blue shirts, and they send you beige and pink: everything that they can't sell. Then they'll say, 'Oh! We're sorry. It's a warehouse mistake. Can you bring it back?' And there's no way you can bring it back: by the time you receive the order, you're in Africa."

In a Nigerian Hausa trader's words:

> The factory designer didn't make caps like the design I'd given him. Maybe he could save money that way. Or maybe his design would be easier for him to make. When I got angry, he agreed to do as I wanted, but instead of the price he quoted me before, he asked for more money. I said, "No! You've already told me the price, and I accepted it! Why now do you change the price?" This

> happens to me maybe 30 or 40 percent of the time when I give them a design; 60 percent of the time they then fix it.

If this is caught before the factory has manufactured the goods, or at latest before the goods have been shipped, then the problem can often be solved, but if the goods have already been sent, this is unlikely to happen, as this trader then related:

> I had a problem last week. The Chinese supplier said that she had two hundred items of a style I liked. I bought them and sent them by air; I didn't check because I trusted her. My brother in Nigeria opened the goods, but they weren't exactly what I had bought. My brother said that he didn't think that that type of goods would sell. But if he returned the clothes, it would cost him more money. Yesterday I received the clothes back from him, and took them back to the supplier. She apologized and said that she didn't know how this problem happened. I asked her to share the expenses. In the end, she didn't pay us back, but she did supply more clothes to make up for it. So I lost money, but not too much; I lost about US$500 on this. Yes, I'll do business with her again, but I'll have to be very careful. You know, every day it happens like this; my friends have many stories. Sometimes it's difficult to check the whole shipment, the whole container by yourself; you need an agent. Sometimes the supplier doesn't want to lose a customer. So even though she can't do something, she tells you that she can do it.

This trader is evenhanded in his views and doesn't blame the problems he encounters only on the supposition that "Chinese cheat." However, in his balanced understanding and general niceness, he was half-jokingly accused by his Chinese middleman in our dinner conversation of being "easy to cheat." We asked this trader later about whether he indeed was easy to cheat, and he said that even though he was sometimes cheated, he remained full of hope: "On my new textile product, I can get 100 percent profit, I think. I hope to sell ten thousand pieces."

If an African has problems with Chinese businesspeople, going to the police is widely seen as useless. The Chinese police are unlikely to speak English (although it's said that police capable of speaking English are assigned to police stations in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi), and even if the African trader speaks Chinese, the police are reluctant to get involved unless there has been physical violence; several times we've seen Chinese police brush off complaints between Africans and Chinese by saying, "Solve it yourselves." One longtime Central

African middleman explained that if there's a dispute, he will talk calmly to the disputant and call a Chinese person he knows to listen to both sides and judge. He can do this because he knows Chinese whom he can trust; but the great majority of African traders know no such people, and so they rely on their Chinese-speaking fellow Africans, a strategy that is less effective, since Africans as intermediaries will not be trusted by many Chinese.

Given all the ways that cheating can take place, it seems remarkable how *little* African traders are cheated: mostly their dealings with Chinese merchants, suppliers, and factories seem to be honest. While most of the African traders we've spoken with relate stories of being cheated, the stories of cheating are so often told because they are so memorable and aggravating to African buyers, not because they are so frequent. We asked a Chinese businesswoman about when and why cheating takes place, and she said unequivocally that most Chinese don't cheat Africans. But some do, because "Chinese factories don't expect a long-term business relation with these African clients. They think that no matter how bad they make the products, it will be a one-time business anyway." She also said that most of the time, Chinese won't cheat Africans, but if the African behaves badly, then Chinese will indeed cheat. Cheating is thus discretionary—cheat the people you don't like and that you will never see again.[14]

Another major cause of accusations of cheating is the language barrier. Contracts are typically in Chinese with no English translation; the African trader may sign the contract having no idea of what it is specifying. Beyond this, in oral communication, if there is no underlying trust between the African trader and the Chinese merchant, a linguistic misunderstanding can in no time explode into accusations of cheating. Because there is no basis for assuming the honesty and goodwill of the other party, this seems often to happen.

There is an additional reason for accusations of cheating. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, bargaining is extremely common—prices are expected to be bargained down to a fraction of the initial asking price. In China too, bargaining takes place, but not with such a wide range of prices. What this means is that the African trader often will assume that the initial price she has been given by a supplier is wildly high and will seek to bargain the price down to an extremely low level. Chinese suppliers, seeking to make a sale, will not set a bottom line, but will simply lower their prices as much as necessary to secure the business and then provide goods of low quality to fit the price he has been given. The African trader, upon receiving the low-quality goods, assumes that she has been cheated, when in fact she has simply received what she has paid for.

A well-informed Somali trader described the situation in exactly these terms:

> The reason why Africans see Chinese as cheaters is that the Africans bargain down below the bottom line. Of course the Chinese will cut corners if you make them, to make a profit. The prices get cut down and down—an African will demand a cheap design, and then another will see the model, and push it down further. The factories and wholesalers don't say, "We have a standard, and we won't go below that standard," as a European or Japanese manufacturer might. The market is pushing them to get cheaper and cheaper. Bargaining is part of the business. But when you're bargaining, you have to know the bottom line.

The result of this misunderstanding is that, as a West African trader scoffed, "In Africa, everywhere you look, the garbage is full of things made in China." Another, more local result, is the frequent African accusation of Chinese cheating. Sometimes Chinese merchants do indeed cheat, having a short-term mentality toward African traders; sometimes linguistic gaps lead to accusations of cheating, resulting from cross-cultural miscommunication concerning trade. But underlying all this is the lack of trust. According to a Somali logistics agent:

> African traders think that Chinese suppliers cheat more than they really do. These days, I'm getting close to some of my Chinese garment suppliers. They are honest, hardworking, decent people. There are only a few bad apples. Saying "Chinese are cheaters!"—it's not usually true. Cheating is mostly due to traders trying to squeeze down the price.

His words are no doubt accurate, but his diagnosis seems partial. The deepest reason for accusations of cheating is that the two sides have so little trust in one another, and when misunderstandings occur, as they so often do in cross-cultural encounters, they fail to give one another the benefit of the doubt.[15] Actual cheating of course does occur with some frequency, but more often it seems that misunderstanding and miscommunication are given the label of cheating.

Over the course of our research, we never were able to witness a quarrel at a factory between a Chinese supplier and African trader; but we did witness half-a-dozen quarrels between African traders and Chinese merchants. I recount two of these here, for what they reveal about the gaps in understanding between Africans and Chinese.

Quarrels between Africans and Chinese

One dispute, witnessed by Linessa and her husband in a large trading mall in Xiaobei in the summer of 2012, was over the payment for an order of clothing.

The Chinese shopkeepers accused a West African trader of not making the full payment for the goods he had received, while the trader maintained that he had indeed paid. The trader could provide no receipt as proof, nor could the shopkeepers provide evidence of nonpayment. After a number of minutes of shouting in the shop between Cheng, the shopkeeper, and Rendell, the trader, they went to the building's management office for mediation. It seemed that no one in the office understood what the West African was saying except for Linessa and her husband; even the interpreter, a recent university graduate who had had little exposure to West African dialects of English, misunderstood his words. Cheng kept shouting at Rendell, asking the interpreting staff to translate: "Have you paid? Only answer 'yes' or 'no'!" Rendell said:

> I paid the deposit two days ago. Then I went trading in other shops. I thought I had paid the rest of the money until they called me today asking for it. I don't have the receipt. But I had the image that I paid in my mind. If they insist I haven't paid, I will pay. But I don't have money now, since I bought things in other shops. I called my office in West Africa and they will send me the money, so that I can pay tomorrow. I will pay. Don't call me a liar. I am not a liar! I've been doing business here for years. If you don't trust me, don't give me the goods.

This last statement made the Chengs, a couple in their fifties and their daughter in her twenties, furious, because they had already delivered the goods and paid the freight charges, which were not refundable. Mr. Cheng shouted:

> This black guy cheated us! We've dealt with him a couple of times. We thought he was trustworthy, so we sent out the goods after he paid us a 4,000 RMB deposit. The goods are now at the transport company and we can't get them back since the company is closed. We probably can't get them back tomorrow either—they might have already been shipped. But the black guy refuses to pay the rest he owes us, the other 8,380 RMB! He wants to cheat us!

The interpreter, not understanding much that Rendell was saying, announced to the eight or so assembled Chinese, "He does not have money. He does not have the deposit," causing them to become all the more infuriated. The dispute finally ended when Rendell's friend arrived, a man who spoke fluent Chinese and whom the Chinese shopkeepers recognized; he promised to pay the remaining 8,380 RMB. He called the shopkeepers "Papa" and "Mama" and persuaded

them to trust him. The Chengs insisted that they did trust him, but said that Rendell must pay tonight or they would not let him go. The dispute flared up again until Rendell's friend said he had the money at home. They finally agreed that the Chengs would accompany Rendell and his friend to his home to collect the money. The dispute in the management office lasted for two hours, and only close to midnight was it resolved.

After the dispute was settled, the building manager spoke with the young interpreter to say, "You don't need to talk in detail with Africans, just ask simple and direct questions. They are always gushing over, making no sense. You don't have to listen to them. Our responsibility is to keep the mall in order so that customers come and business gets done, that's all." To the Chinese shopkeepers, he said:

> You shouldn't ever deliver the goods until you've received all the money. If the customer has paid you, you need to give them a receipt and make a copy for yourselves as a record, so that disputes like this won't occur. I can tell you clearly that if you were dealing with a Chinese trader, there's no chance that you would ever get the rest of your money back.

This account is both simple in its particulars and revealing. The Chengs, from carelessness, had shipped the goods of a customer who had not yet fully paid for them. Chinese merchants do occasionally give credit to African traders they know well, but this was not the case here. Rendell, in turn, had already spent the remainder of the money he owed on other goods; whether this was because he was trying to cheat or was simply forgetful is unclear, but the fact that he returned to the Chengs' store when they called him implies the latter—if he had wanted to cheat, he could simply have never shown up again, and the Chengs would have lost their money. This is a strategy occasionally used by unscrupulous African traders.

The Chengs and Rendell had no common language in which to communicate, except for extremely minimal English; this is one reason they so readily accused him of cheating, not giving him the benefit of any doubt. The building office had only an incompetent interpreter, although a shrewd if racist manager. Rendell's friend saved the situation by paying for Rendell—he did not have to do this in any legal sense. But the office, with its many shouting Chinese, would have made it very difficult for Rendell to have escaped without paying—the police would have been called had Rendell's friend not shown up, and Rendell might have been taken off to jail.

In this example, African traders were bullied by Chinese merchants who essentially held them hostage. However, in other cases it is Africans who do the bullying. Linessa and I were at a store at the Tianxiu Building that sells wigs and hair extensions, much sought after among African women. A Chinese trading company in Guangzhou had taken Ruby, a Nigerian woman living in England, to this store, along with her Nigerian friend. We watched a long and drawn out bargaining session, with Ruby arguing profusely for four hours with Daisy, a young Chinese clerk. The argument was initially over whether wigs of Peruvian hair and Brazilian hair were at the same price (South American hair is softer than Chinese hair and is highly desirable)—the argument was over 60 RMB, or less than US$10. At one point, the Chinese agent hired by these two Nigerians, a young woman named Tiffany, came by to tell Daisy and her male Chinese boss who was silently looking on that she would never bring customers to their shop again unless they relented on price to her Nigerian client. I took Tiffany aside to ask her, "What if Chinese merchants say 'You're Chinese too! You should help us!'" She said, "My first loyalty is always to my customer." She also told me that she had an African boyfriend.

Ruby continued to insist that all the hair she bought should be the same price, while Daisy argued that not all the hair was the same price, and that because she had to give a commission to Tiffany, she couldn't give a lower price for the hair. This went on for hours, but eventually Daisy gave in. With this, Ruby began asking for various free combs and bracelets as gifts. At this point, the Nigerian woman who had accompanied Ruby said to me as a quiet aside, "I really think she's going too far. Business should be win-win, not win-lose."

After the Nigerian women left, Daisy was shaking with anger:

> I was dealing with that woman from 12:00 until late afternoon! She wanted more discount, and more discount! I had already given her a big discount! She kept talking, talking, talking—I really didn't want to sell the hair to her! Many African people say, "Give me this! Give me that!" They like a gift: a comb, some lotion—they are very rough. We have a rule to give them a gift. But sometimes they just keep asking for more. Don't you think Africans are greedy? I hate them! The sale was about 10,000 RMB and I get a little as commission, but I don't care about that! I didn't have my lunch, my supper! Yes, I shouldn't have gotten angry. I was acting like a little kid. Still, I'm getting fed up with African customers. My heart doesn't like their culture, their behavior. But I'm young, just a student. I have no choice—I must keep learning.

Her boss told us, "She's so innocent. Some customers really like a girl like this, because they think she'll never lie to them. In time, she may be more sophisticated. But not now."

Daisy told us later that she becomes afraid when Africans get angry at her. She is half the size of Ruby, and when Ruby leaned forward to shout at her, it was intimidating, no doubt contributing to her emotional reaction once Ruby left. In the quarrel described earlier, Rendell and his friend were outnumbered and overwhelmed by many angry Chinese. In this case, the obverse occurred, with Ruby a much larger and more vocal presence than Daisy. We've seen both of these situations on a number of occasions—a lone African trader surrounded by angry Chinese, or a lone Chinese clerk dealing with vociferous Africans. Physical violence only very rarely ensues, but this kind of physical intimidation is a strategy that both sides occasionally use.

The two examples of quarrels depicted above are partly a matter of individual differences—there are the polite and the rude, gentlewomen and gentlemen versus louts and harridans everywhere. In the first example, Chinese appear closer to the loutish end of the spectrum, while in the second example, Africans do. This is often related to social class and education—we consistently saw that the better educated the person, whether Chinese or African, the less likely they were to draw an antagonistic response from their African or Chinese counterparts, in that they behaved with a degree of courtesy unlikely to provoke hackles. But the examples just seen show the fallacy of taking this interpretation too far—the university-educated Chinese interpreter of the first example was incompetent, and the cosmopolitan Nigerian-English buyer of the second example was the bully.

These examples show larger fundamental assumptions at work in African-Chinese interactions. Chinese merchants sometimes assume that because it is their country and because Africa is not as developed as China, they can treat Africans as ignorant and backward, as in the first example. In turn, African traders sometimes assume that Chinese as a rule are trying to cheat them and so they must always bargain the price down to the lowest possible level, as in the second example, despite the resentment this may breed. These mistaken cultural assumptions lead to a large degree of misunderstanding between Chinese merchants and African traders.

Chinese Views of Africans

There is a great need for more trust between Africans and Chinese. One place where relationships of trust might be formed is at nongovernmental organiza-

tions, such as the one in Guangzhou that seeks specifically to foster African-Chinese linkages. In the fall of 2013, Linessa and I paid the organization a number of visits; their primary purpose is to teach Africans to adapt to life in Guangzhou and the Chinese language. From March through November 2013, there were some fifty Africans participating in Chinese classes, mostly from Francophone African countries. There were seven or eight Africans in the English classes of Chinese that we attended, and fifteen to twenty in the French classes, a good number. But its staff seemed to have little knowledge of Africans in Guangzhou and not much interest in helping them, beyond instruction in Chinese. Some of the Africans who went to this center had suspicions as to what it was really for. As one West African said:

> The staff never tell us the real purpose of the center, but I know what they're really looking for. They're teaching us Chinese; but they're giving us small things and wanting much bigger things from us. Some of my friends don't understand. They even want the center to help them extend visas. That is exactly what the center wants! They spy on us and catch us if they find our visas have expired.

His assumption was that the service center had a relationship with the Chinese government and reported on Africans to the government. And indeed, he and several other African students one day came upon one of the staff members working with policemen, checking Africans' visas on the street. This staff member was also a graduate student in anthropology at a local university. Later I asked this staff member why, as an anthropologist and social worker, he had helped Chinese police when they were checking passports. From a Western perspective, it seems quite unethical to help police capture and put in jail some of the very people you are researching and presumably trying to help. He said that the police had asked him to serve as an interpreter, and he felt that he should help them; he believed that it was important for an anthropologist to aid the state and serve his country. This is a quite different interpretation of anthropology from that which most Western anthropologists would hold. As word spread of his actions, some of the Africans who had formerly talked openly with us became more diffident. "Is that what anthropologists do?" one asked us. We could only say that most don't, but that this was China, where both nongovernmental organizations and anthropologists may be seen to exist for the service of the state (although many Chinese anthropologists we know would vehemently dispute this).

An event meant as a public celebration of African-Chinese relations served

as a wry illustration of this type of relationship in Guangzhou. A photographer invited nongovernmental organizations, professors, and various other guests to an exhibition of his photographs of Africans in Xiaobei, including close-ups of African faces taken without the permission of those who were photographed. The meeting was in Mandarin with no interpreter; not surprisingly, none of the Africans invited through the service center showed up except for one, a friend brought by Linessa. Because he was the only African in attendance, he found himself pushed onto the stage to sputter something on behalf of Africans to the Chinese TV crews, to his great consternation. The celebration of Chinese-African relations was by Chinese and for Chinese, with Africans only as images for display.

The lack of curiosity about Africans shown by the service center and in this public event reflects a larger general attitude of Chinese toward Africans: "This is our country, not theirs. Why should we learn about their countries? They're in China, so they should learn Chinese and about China." This why the service center focused not on helping its African clients resolve any of their difficulties but on simply teaching them Chinese. This attitude is not necessarily reflected in business operations. In one cheap hotel I stayed at, staff members were continuously studying Portuguese textbooks, since many of their customers were Angolan; at a hair store, we found the staff regularly studying advanced English textbooks. Clearly when it comes to business there is no nationalistic insistence on the Chinese language.

However, the more that some of the Chinese we know deal with Africans, the more dislike and even contempt they may feel for them. This is revealed in several of our interviews. The first interview was conducted mostly by Linessa in Cantonese with Meifen, a woman in her late thirties with a stall in Guangyuanxi selling children's clothing and international phone calls:

> I find Africans [the Nigerians who come to her shop] to be unreasonable. But they're my customers, so I can't have quarrels with them all the time. My business depends on them. So most of the time I just get angry alone. . . . Nigerians are generally garbage. They're garbage but smart in their business dealings. The Africans here think that we Chinese need them. But that's not true. If they don't come, we can do business in the domestic market. We'll do well without doing export business with Africans. I myself would rather earn less but see them all deported from our country! I'll quit this business soon, I'm so sick of them. . . . Yes, sometimes I flirt with Africans, but it's all for business, to make Africans think I'm nice, so that they'll come back again and again. Every time

> they ask me if I'm married, I don't answer but just smile. I won't tell them that I have a husband. (No, I don't speak much English, but enough so that they can understand what I'm saying, especially when I'm angry!)

A man in her shop made several short calls to Nigeria, each lasting from one to three minutes. At the end, the call monitor showed that he should pay 5.5 RMB. But he refused and walked away. Meifen said to him loudly that he must pay her at least 2 RMB, and when he returned to pay that much, she memorized his face so she could ban him from using her phones again until he cleared his bill. Meifen said she earns little from the international phone calls but keeps the phone business because she thinks it will bring more customers to buy clothes from her. Once when a Nigerian man was with his friends, Meifen asked him for the 200 RMB phone fee he had accumulated and told them that he had defaulted on payment for years. The Nigerian man got angry and said he would kill her. One of the Nigerian's friends tried to stop the quarrel and paid 200 RMB for him.

Meifen makes her living from the Nigerian customers who come to her store, but she despises them, largely because they refuse to fully pay her. This is partly because they lack money—a Nigerian trader who does not have an internationally viable mobile phone link is clearly among the less affluent traders—but no doubt also because they are taking advantage of her as a woman, one who they feel they can dominate. She flirts with her customers, she tells us, simply to keep their business, hiding her feelings toward them; but she seems angry enough to make her feelings difficult to disguise. She abandoned her business in Guangyuanxi shortly after we last spoke with her in the spring of 2014.

We also had a long talk with Billy, a Chinese man in his thirties who speaks excellent English and who has run a car parts stall in a Nigerian mall since 2007:

> Africans are not well educated. Europeans are better because they are from developed countries. Besides, the Africans have religions that I don't understand. Many are Muslims. I think Muslims are crazy; 90 percent of the terrorists in the world are Muslims. I have some African friends who give me help. But I think that 80 percent of the black people are not good people. Africans tend to say everyone is a good friend. But in fact they don't treat you like a good friend. They'll ask you to deliver the goods before giving you the money, saying that since you're a good friend, you should trust them. I delivered goods to Africa; my "friend" received them, but he didn't pay me and still hasn't paid. If an African says that you are a friend, and you accept it, you'll feel embarrassed to refuse a request—it will make you lose face if you disappoint a friend. That's why

> Chinese get cheated by Africans. My baseline in doing business with Africans is to get full payment before delivering goods.
>
> Yes, there is discrimination against Africans in Guangzhou. But partly they should blame themselves: I sometimes meet Africans in the metro that have lots of body odor. I admit that I have negative opinions about them. But I welcome them—my business depends on them. I should be thankful to them! How can I earn their money and dislike them? I help Africans I meet on the street who need help.

Billy is a bit more reflective than Meifen in his views, although, like Meifen, he is notably blunt. Africans generally can't be trusted, he maintains; most are bad people, he says, even though he tempers his remarks because they are the source of his business. Such an uncensored view was also expressed in what a taxi driver said to Linessa one evening:

> Black people are not good. You should be careful when you talk to them. I won't take black customers; I've had bad experiences with them. They only pay 15 RMB when they're supposed to pay 20—I'll lose a lot of income if I take them far and they refuse to pay. I don't think this is racism. This is experience. Africans aren't grateful. Guangzhou is the most open place in China and Guangzhou welcomes foreigners like them. But the Africans don't acknowledge that. They don't thank us, but only complain.

In several of these accounts, the complaint, whether in terms of telephone calls, car parts, or taxi fares, is that Africans (and particularly Nigerians, since these interviews took place in Guangyuanxi) don't pay the money they owe. There are two reasons for this. First there is the prevalence of bargaining in all aspects of life in Nigeria and many African countries. In China, you can't bargain a taxi fare down once you're in the taxi—the meter is the meter. Second, there is the fact that these traders—particularly if they are overstayers—may have little money. One or two RMB is worth bargaining over and running away from to avoid paying, even if this earns them the ire of the Chinese merchants with whom they're dealing.

We spoke with another Chinese shopkeeper, May, a woman in her thirties who had a more sympathetic view of Africans in Guangzhou (as well as a long-term African partner):

> In China, many young people go to university and have their eyes opened. But old people in China, their eyes are not open; they haven't seen many

> foreigners. Good education teaches you that people are all the same: business is business. Chinese people without education think that Africa is poor, and so they don't like Africans; they like people from the U.S. and the U.K. because they think they're rich. For me, in university I heard Michael Jackson's music and liked it so much—it taught me that your skin color doesn't matter—it made my mind change. Before, I just thought that all black people are poor and are maybe doing bad things. China is slowly opening now in doing business, just like America before. Just as Chinese want to go to America, Africans want to come to China: to get a good life—it's the same. And you get a good life through doing business to earn money. But in America, people speak English—Africans and Americans can easily understand each other. For China, when traders come, they cannot speak Chinese, but only English. People in business and in the Chinese government can't yet speak English very well. For many foreigners who come here, the number one problem is language. But that can't stop them from coming, because money is more important than language.

May has a broader view of Africans than most of her fellow Chinese, the kind of view that points toward a multiethnically harmonious Guangzhou society, at least if more of her fellow Chinese come to adopt her view.[16]

African Views of Chinese

One point that many African traders make is how little Chinese know about Africa. Echoing May's words, the African traders we spoke with sometimes said, "They think we're all poor and dirty"; "They think Africa is a single country, not a whole continent"; "I have to go on Google Maps to show them where my country is." It is remarkable that only a few African traders we've spoken with counter this, blaming themselves for their own lack of understanding of China. Many traders also comment on their experiences of racism, on how, for example, Chinese won't sit next to them on buses. As Ganbo, a Nigerian Hausa trader in his late twenties told us:

> When I go into the bus, sometimes people hold their nose. But China is changing, because they have seen so many new things: they have to adapt. The Chinese who live in Xiaobei are different from the ones who live elsewhere. They are familiar seeing black people. But other places, they may have never seen a black person before. So they'll be staring at you. . . . Now some Chinese in Xiaobei can even speak some African languages.

Ganbo indicates a shift in Chinese attitudes toward familiarity; but other traders maintain that familiarity breeds contempt. Asad, a Kenyan trader in his late thirties, is remarkable for his willingness to speak to Chinese about what he sees as their racism:

> There was a Chinese woman working here—she was speaking harshly to African customers. I asked her why, and she said, "I don't like talking to these people." I said, "Who pays your salary? We're not talking about like or dislike. This is business. You have to smile at your customers!" When I look at the government of Kenya and see how corrupt they are, the Chinese government seems good, but not the people—you can't trust people here. If you could trust them, you wouldn't need to come here! You could call from Nairobi and make an order. People say that China is a superpower in the world, but how can it be a superpower if people behave like this?
>
> The problem in China is that it's a developed country but not civilized. It's not cosmopolitan. The government in China is good, but the people are not open. I like them in some ways—ladies don't want to have sex with men until they're married. That's like my country—that's good, because I'm a Muslim. But no, I'm not happy to stay in China; I'd rather be in Kenya. We in the business community are so scared. I've been a victim so many times of Chinese cheating, even two weeks ago. We agreed on 70 RMB to drive me here with my cargo. But when we arrived, he said, "You have to pay me 100 RMB. If you don't pay, I'll keep one bag." This is jungle law! There's nothing you can do.

What we hear in Asad's account is a mirror image of what we earlier saw. If Africans sometimes cheat Chinese by refusing to pay the fees they owe, Chinese sometimes cheat Africans by overcharging them. Beyond this, as Asad tells us, if Chinese merchants could be trusted, then African traders wouldn't need to come all the way to Guangzhou to inspect their orders.

Others say that cheating is diminishing, as Chinese businesspeople come to understand that African traders may be doing business in China for the long haul. Haji, a Tanzanian Muslim in his forties said:

> I've been coming to China since 2007, four times a year. Previously we had to worry about getting cheated, but recently there's been improvement. Chinese have come to understand long-term business. If you give them an order now, mostly they don't cheat you. The owners of businesses now understand that

> language is important for business. So they're hiring graduates who speak English. I like people in China; they're peaceful, there's not much violence compared to African nations. No, I've never felt racism from Chinese, because I deal with businesspeople, and they're good to me because I have money. I only go to places that deal with Africans. Even if they can't communicate, they're trying to smile, to welcome you. My son now is studying in China—he's in medical school.

The diminishment in cheating may take place because Haji only goes to places that deal with Africans. Phillip, a Kenyan trader in his late forties, advises forbearance in the face of discrimination, but seeks for his whole family to come to China:

> You need to just put up with the discrimination as a lesson in life. Chinese are never comfortable sitting close to you. In Africa, we have friends and we visit their home. Don't expect that from the Chinese. In Guangzhou, it's all business. I have encountered discrimination a number of times. I don't blame them, per se. I understand that this has been a closed society. People have not interacted with foreigners, particularly with black people. . . . I have five children back in Kenya. I'd like to take my wife and children to China and have them learn Cantonese. I believe China is the way to go now: America is going down in the world, and China is coming up. I'm learning the Chinese language and can write my name in Chinese.

China, for Phillip, is the wave of the future, as the United States is past. The racial discrimination he experiences is a product of that past, but the future in China will be both full of opportunities and, presumably, more interethnic harmony.

Ruth, a Tanzanian trader in her thirties, spoke of how Chinese cheating was perhaps taught to them by the foreigners who had been tempting Chinese to cheat:

> Some Chinese are honest. Maybe before mixing with foreigners, most were honest. When the foreigners came, you realized that if you were selling this glass to Chinese for 2 RMB, you can sell it to foreigners for 3 RMB. If someone is greedy, you've aroused their vices: "Hey, here's an opportunity to cheat!" Most of the Chinese merchants I deal with are honest, I think, but I don't always know. My Christian faith helps me in trading with them; I pray over the deals I make. . . . When I get in a taxi with a Chinese driver, he'll sometimes

> say, "Oh, you have big breasts," or something like that. This may mean that he's been having sex with African women, with sex workers.

The great majority of African women one sees in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi are traders, but there are sex workers too, identifiable by their attire and makeup. Carol, a Ugandan hairdresser in her thirties, has many sex-worker clients:

> The brokers tell them in Uganda, "I can take you abroad—there are jobs there—if you pay me US$4,500." They've got to work to pay off their debt. Some of them say "No, no, no, no," but others stay and work; they feel they have no choice. After they pay off their debt, they're free; some go home but others continue. When they're at my shop, they talk about customers who are Chinese, white men, African. It depends where they work. I've heard that if women traders come to China, they get here and don't have money, they do prostitution to buy the stuff they want. If I wanted money, and decided to close my eyes and do that job, maybe now I would have a lot of money.

Last chapter, Vivian described how sex work, at least on the street if not the clubs, is in fact not so lucrative; but the point here, as mentioned by Ruth, is that the presence of African sex workers may leach into Chinese perceptions of African women as a whole. And indeed, sexual transgressions between Africans and Chinese—particularly African men and Chinese women—may have a powerful impact on popular perceptions, as one Kenyan, Enoch, feared. As he told us:

> I was checked again for my passport. Afterward, I asked a friend, "Why are the police everywhere these days?" He said, "They're fed up with Africans. Africans are doing all kinds of bad things." Then he showed me six or seven pictures of an African guy holding two Chinese women intimately, and another showing three African guys molesting a Chinese woman. He said, "This is what Chinese are now seeing on Weibo and WeChat."

"No wonder Chinese don't like Africans!" he said. "Look at what Africans are doing to Chinese!" In late 2013, as we've discussed, there was a general upsurge in police presence in Xiaobei and particularly in Guangyuanxi. This new police monitoring was apparently designed to crack down on drug dealers, of whom there have been a few, and more broadly on overstayers, of whom there have been many. But perhaps these popular rumors of African malfeasance have also had their effect in furthering anti-African feeling in China, and enjoining Chinese

police to act. Many Africans, particularly Nigerians, have seen the police raids as indicative of how they are unwelcome in China. One Nigerian trader said to us, "In dealing with Africans, China needs to love them, give them a place. Africans have a strong mind, they can have anger. If you treat Africans badly, they will want revenge." China, this crackdown continually reminds them, cannot be home. The future of African-Chinese relations in Guangzhou very much remains to be seen; but for the present, among the African areas of Guangzhou, Xiaobei if not Guangyuanxi continues to flourish.[17]

FOUR

Low-End Globalization

Low-End Globalization/High-End Globalization

When people in the developed world think about globalization, what typically comes to mind are the goods and services of multinational corporations—McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Apple, Samsung, Sony, Facebook, Google, and so on. This is what I term "high-end globalization"—globalization as typically practiced by vast organizations with billions of dollars in budgets, planet-wide advertising campaigns, and battalions of lawyers. Aside from this, there is another kind of globalization, "low-end globalization,"* "the transnational flow of people and goods involving relatively small amounts of capital and informal, sometimes semi-legal or illegal transactions, often associated with 'the developing world' but in fact apparent across the globe."[1] This is globalization as experienced by most of the world's people, practiced by traders with a few friends or family

*"Low-end globalization" is also called "globalization from below" by various authors, including myself in a book I coedited. I use the term "low-end globalization" because "globalization from below" has been sometimes used to refer to political activists, which is not what I mean here; but the label is less important than the phenomenon, whatever it may be called.

members buying a relatively small quantity of goods that are often sold by street vendors or in sidewalk stalls rather than in malls or stores. Low-end globalization operates more or less under the radar of the law in that it deals in copies or knockoffs, because its goods may get through customs via bribery, and because these goods typically are under- or untaxed. But just because these practices are often illegal does not mean that they are immoral.

In January 2013, I attended a seminar of twenty or so American-based business professors along with a West African logistics agent. These professors sought to understand trade and globalization in China; the agent spoke matter-of-factly in response to the professors' questions about how his business sometimes involved the shipping of copy goods from China, where they were made, to West African countries, where they were sold. He said, "We tell our customers that it's illegal; but if they bring such goods to us, we'll ship them. Many West African consumers want these goods." Several of the American-based professors expressed condemnation, wondering if he were also engaged in human trafficking. The agent was shocked, although he was too polite to express this to his audience. As he fumed later:

> I once worked for a large American company. Some of my American colleagues were getting drunk every night and sleeping with women outside of marriage. As a Muslim, I would never do those things.* Yes, I send copy goods. Everyone uses copy goods in my country. But that's not immoral. Who is a more moral person, me or those Americans?

From his point of view, he was more moral, because his personal and professional lives were exemplary, and sending copies had nothing to do with morality and everything to do with developed-world imperialism. He felt that the legal and the moral were fundamentally different things, with morality the basis of how one should live and legality no more than the arbitrary rules set by developed-world countries and companies. His business may have been at times illegal, but it was definitely not immoral, he felt, since he was absolutely scrupulous in his dealings with his clients.

This is one critical difference between high-end and low-end globalization—attitudes toward legality. For trade between most African or Middle Eastern or South Asian countries and China, copies and knockoffs are standard goods,

*Muslim men may sometimes have more than one wife, as recognized by Islam. But it is religiously forbidden for them to have mistresses (although of course some do anyway).

which few traders can neglect if they want to stay in business. Beyond this, it is virtually impossible to do business between China and most countries in these regions without paying the requisite bribes at certain points; anyone who did otherwise would not be seen as moral but simply as foolish.

There are other crucial differences as well between these forms of globalization. In high-end globalization, the contract is key and the businessperson who breaks contractual agreements will be subject to sanctions and lawsuits. In low-end globalization, contracts mean little and courts are seen as useless; what is key is reputation. Low-end entrepreneurs cannot afford to be seen as less than fully honest and reputable. As the West African logistics agent quoted above said to us, "If I cheated someone, they couldn't go to the courts anywhere. But they could call my brother or my father back home and tell them that I cheated; they could tell everyone I know back home, 'You know that guy in China? He cheated me; he's a crook. Watch out!' And my reputation would be ruined."

Other differences between high-end and low-end globalization are less matters of law than of social practice. Businesses based in low-end globalization often have a smaller volume and cash flow than those based in high-end globalization. Businesses based in low-end globalization tend to have a greater focus on social relations with customers than those based in high-end globalization; since interpersonal trust is the basis of this form of globalization, this may be seen as essential to business. To take just one example of this, an East African logistics agent told us that his role in his Guangzhou office was basically to "meet and greet" his customers. His office provided tea for his customers, as well as beckoning chairs and couches, free Internet service, and broadcasts of home-country news; his customers would come for hours at a time to socialize with their fellow countrymen and women and exchange information about trade in China and about politics at home. He told us that he needed to do this to keep his customers coming back—this is how he sustained their loyalty. On the other hand, the several high-end logistics agents we know—those who typically may ship not twenty containers a month but two hundred or more—did not engage in such services for their clients. For them, their office was not a social forum but a place strictly for business: their customers signed the requisite forms to have their goods shipped, paid, and left. The high-end agents say that if their business office was more welcoming, socializing customers would interfere with their business.

Several other contrasts are related to this. The businesses engaged in high-end globalization that we know of advertise and have conspicuous signs announcing themselves. Those engaged in low-end globalization that we know of do not ad-

vertise, since their business comes through word-of-mouth; sometimes they do not even have a sign on their door, since all their customers know who they are. For businesses in high-end globalization, if a new customer walks in with cash, a passport, and an order, there will typically be no questions asked; for businesses in low-end globalization, business is typically centered on those of one's own ethnicity or nationality, and if a customer of a different nationality or ethnicity enters, they may be refused. As the Nigerian Igbo owner of one such business told us, "Why on earth would such a person come here? There must be something fishy going on." In terms of practices, the businesses of high-end globalization may require cash or bank drafts or money orders sent through well-known banks; the businesses of low-end globalization are often engaged in informal money-transferring practices. As far as technology goes, high-end businesses rely primarily on e-mail, which is traceable and can be used as evidence in disputes. Low-end businesses typically rely on text messaging, which is easier, more informal, and more temporary. Low-end businesses generally run a higher risk of losing money than do high-end businesses, reflecting the conditions under which they must function, which is why they emphasize personal trust so much.

Low-end and high-end businesses, like low-end and high-end globalization as a whole, are ideal types; any business may have features of both, just as any given trader may engage in both. Nonetheless, the features we've just described are broadly characteristic of these two forms of globalization. I had the chance to bring together an East African logistics agent, Adnan, and a Japanese tax accountant, Suzuki, for dinner one night in a Turkish restaurant in Xiaobei, to discuss their different and similar ways of doing business. Adnan runs his own logistics business with four employees; Suzuki is an employee of a well-known international accounting company with thousands of employees. Both men were surprised to find that they had to be exceedingly nice to their clients in similar ways. Suzuki had his corporate clients phoning him up to play golf with them but also to go with them to immigration for visa renewals and a range of other services; Adnan took his customers to the hospital when they were sick, to the bank when they needed an account, and to immigration when they needed visa extensions. But their differences were more profound, particularly in terms of their relation to the law. Suzuki said, "I basically help my clients avoid paying taxes without breaking the law"; this is his job, but if he breaks the law and is discovered, he will be fired. Adnan said that he regularly breaks the law in sending copies because his customers demand it, and if he didn't, he would go out of business. Suzuki and Adnan are playing the same game, attempting to satisfy

their customers, but in this game, Suzuki can't break the law while Adnan must. The two men parted friends, each marveling at how the other practiced business.

Yang reports on an example of conflict resolution typical of low-end globalization.[2] In July 2010, there was a fight between two Nigerians, one a trader and the other a shopkeeper. The trader accused the shopkeeper of stealing some of his goods and selling them in his store, and the latter denied it. A "peacekeeper" came—a person appointed by Nigerians in the building as a settler of conflicts—separated the two, and asked them to explain themselves. It turned out that previously the trader bought the clothes for US$5,000 and sent them to a nearby Chinese cargo company. He must have been followed by someone on his way to the warehouse, where the thief, who was suspected to be Chinese (if he had been African, he would presumably have been noticed by the Chinese warehouse guards), took the goods and resold them to the Nigerian shopkeeper. As the trader walked past the store, he saw the identifying markings on the packaging, and became enraged. In the end, the peacekeeper solved the problem by asking the trader to pay compensation to get his clothes back, because it was his "fault" for choosing that cargo company and his "bad luck" for being followed. "Peacekeepers" exist because police can't be called; extralegal Nigerian Igbos must police themselves to keep the Chinese police at bay.

I experienced a somewhat parallel event, dealing not with Africans but with Uyghurs. I had dinner in January 2014 with a Communist Party official who told me that if I had any trouble with "criminals" during my research, I should immediately go to the police. A few minutes later, I was walking through the tunnel that leads to the New Don Franc Hotel, full of Uyghur street hawkers, and felt a poke in my back. As soon as I was out of the tunnel, I saw that my computer was gone, taken from my small backpack. Cursing myself for my heedlessness, I asked a Uyghur vendor to tell me who had taken it; the vendor pretended not to know, but eventually gave up the key information that the thief was Uyghur. I desperately needed the computer back—I had several weeks of downloaded recordings that I hadn't yet transcribed—and so I said I would pay 2,000 RMB for it. The Uyghur vendors then beckoned me to wait, sitting on a stool behind their stalls in the tunnel. Eight or so older Uyghur men soon appeared and gathered to talk about this case: I knew they were, because while I couldn't understand Uyghur, they kept saying "computer" in English. After I had been there for an hour, there was an explosion of shouting: a bedraggled-looking man, the thief they said, was brought in and punched and kicked at length. Half an hour later the computer was brought back. The man who had initially revealed that the

thief was Uyghur appeared with two other men, including one who was obviously their boss; I gave them 600 RMB, thinking that I could get away without paying the large amount I had earlier promised; I was given back 100 RMB, because they felt I was paying too much.

Why did these men give me back the computer? My sense is that ethnic pride prevailed: "A fellow Uyghur stole this old foreigner's computer and he'll think all Uyghurs are thieves. We need to help!" Recovering the computer was a matter of commerce, but only to a limited degree—mostly it was a matter of ethnic honor. A high-end response to the stealing of the computer would have been for me to go to the police, which undoubtedly would have resulted in my never seeing the computer again. The low-end response, based not on formal institutions but on interpersonal trust, was to make an appeal to those of the same ethnicity as the thief on the basis of honor and compassion. I didn't think this through at the time, but luckily it worked. This self-disciplining within one's ethnic group is true for Nigerian Igbos, in the first example above, and for Uyghurs in this example. This is preferable to going to the police, both because police are seen as ineffective and also because involving the police would be seen as a way of exposing one's own group's dirty laundry—better to keep such conflicts private and solve them internally. This, broadly, is how conflict resolution works within low-end globalization as a whole.

In large part, the differences between low-end and high-end globalization are differences between business relationships in the developing as opposed to the developed world; but this isn't always the case. Low-end globalization is practiced in the U.S. and elsewhere, wherever the informal economy flourishes in transnational form.[3] In many African capitals, there are stores selling original Samsung and Apple phones and other fashionable goods, stores not much different in their business practices from stores in New York or Paris or Seoul. However, not far from these stores will likely be their low-end counterparts, selling copy or knockoff goods for a fraction of the price to magnitudes more people.

Low-end globalization is not conducted only by Africans in Guangzhou; rather, there are traders from an array of ethnicities. A young Indian businessman to whom I mentioned that I'd heard that the average African trader sends one-eighth of a container home and the average Indian trader sends ten containers home, explained why:

> Yes, the average Indian trader might be sending ten containers, but that's because the profit margin is so low. If the product is bought for $10, the profit margin will be $10.10. There's so little profit that you need to send lots of

> containers to make any money. The African market isn't so developed—there isn't so much competition. Africans have the reputation for bargaining down to incredibly cheap prices, but Indians can't do that, because they buy in such volume that the price is already widely known—you can't bargain the price down, because the market is saturated.

Indian business, he said, is indeed conducted in terms of low-end globalization as I described it to him, but on the basis of particular governmental, social, and market conditions, as is the case for every transmutation of low-end globalization in different societies. What, then, of China? China is moving from low-end to high-end globalization, but the Chinese merchants and suppliers described in this book remain very much within the realm of low-end globalization. Low-end globalization works most effectively among those who can trust each other. When low-end globalization involves people of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, often there are conflicts, as we saw last chapter, because interpersonal trust is in short supply and the legal framework and institutional safeguards that characterize high-end globalization are lacking. This is the situation faced by African traders in Guangzhou.

How Low-End Globalization Works: Sourcing, Money, Copies, and Customs

The standard procedure for doing business among African traders in Guangzhou is to buy goods from a Chinese merchant, or, for larger or more specialized orders, to seek out a supplier. The supplier can be found through the trader's inquiries to middlemen or through websites such as Alibaba. If the trader is working through a middleman, then the trader may accompany the middleman to the factory but may leave the details of production and transport to the middleman. If the trader does not have a trusted middleman, then the trader will do this herself, watching closely how the goods are manufactured, transported to the warehouse, and loaded into containers for shipment back to Africa. Low-end globalization, based on *caveat emptor*, generally requires that the trader be there observing everything with an eagle eye.

Sourcing and Supplying

The simplest sourcing is to order a product being sold in a retail outlet or already produced in a factory. The buyer simply needs to select and buy and arrange for

transport. It's more complicated if the trader has a design that she seeks the factory to manufacture. One of the extraordinary features of Chinese manufacturing is that any design brought by a trader, from a shirt to a mobile phone, can be produced in short order by a Chinese factory for their African customer. In at least some cases, the goods brought to be manufactured are copies, but this doesn't matter. A Kenyan logistics agent said this:

> One guy bought a bottle of Clear [Unilever] Shampoo and asked a Chinese factory to make him six thousand bottles to sell in Somalia; he didn't understand that he couldn't do that. He never knew about the concept of trademark. His goods were confiscated in the Hong Kong port. He called me with his problem, and I told him that he had to disappear, otherwise he'd definitely be going to jail.

This threat of jail is in Hong Kong, not China, the world center for manufacturing the goods of low-end globalization. There are some Chinese factories that won't make copies or knockoffs, but most will with little fear of prosecution by authorities. There are some African and Arab traders we know who specialize in copy or knockoff goods made by willing Chinese factories, but many we know offer their own designs, particularly for clothing. Their common complaint is that the supplier will provide something different from and inferior to their design, a constant concern of traders. An Ethiopian trader said to us, "It's much better to cry in China than to cry back in Africa" over faulty orders. He meant by this that if the trader discovers these flawed goods in his shipment before they leave China, he can probably get the goods replaced, but if he finds them only after they have arrived in Africa, he almost certainly cannot, at least not without considerable expense.

For smaller orders, contracts may never be proffered, but for larger orders they usually are. However, generally they are only in Chinese. Traders say that they don't dare ask for a translation, for fear that the Chinese company will claim it's too much trouble and abandon the deal. Larger traders have their own Chinese staff to explain the contract, but most traders we know simply sign blindly. In one West African trader's words:

> Yes, I always sign contracts that I don't understand. I could ask for an English version or a French version, but it means the factory has to spend extra money to find a translator. The factory will think, "This guy is so *máfan*" [麻烦, Man-

> darin, "troublesome, annoying"]. . . . If they provide an English contract, they are very kind; if not, I just sign the Chinese contract.

The standard rule seems to be that the bigger a business deal is, the more necessary it is to sign a contract; but on the other hand, the more you can trust the person you are dealing with, the less the need to sign a contract.

If constant vigilance is one way to avoid losing money in dealing with suppliers, another way is, in the words of an astute Congolese trader and middleman, "always go very slowly"—do not leap into any deal. African traders have often maintained to us that most African traders in Guangzhou make money in their dealings, but one reason for this statement is that it includes only those traders who return repeatedly to Guangzhou, rather than those who come once, lose their money, and never return. What percentage of traders fit this category we can't know, but their number is not inconsiderable.[4]

Money

The goods that African traders buy from suppliers are usually paid for with cash. Some Chinese companies accept letters of credit from a few African banks, and some traders, particularly those with more money in play, use letters of credit and other banking instruments, but this remains the exception—mostly, cash is king. African currencies are generally unconvertable in China, and so these traders bring U.S. dollars—traders come to Guangzhou with US$5,000 or $20,000 or $100,000 that they then convert to RMB, sometimes legally in banks, but more typically through the many dozens of Hui money changers in Xiaobei. When traders need to transfer money between China and Africa, they typically can't or won't wire money or use bank transfers, but use more informal systems. *Hawala*, used by Somalis and Kenyans, is one such money-transfer system under the radar of international surveillance. As one *hawala* agent told us:

> You just give your name and an identity tip, so that if you want to send US$100 from Guangzhou to your mother in Somalia, we send her full name to my agent in that Somali village—that might be all. No actual money gets moved. If it's a small amount of money, I charge 5 percent, for $100 for example. If the amount goes up, I can go down to as low as .25 percent. Yes, I guess this is money laundering—how can I send money from one country to another? I'm not a banker! I don't have a license to send or receive money!

Sometimes the amount of money sent can be very large indeed. A Kenyan trader said:

> One of my *hawala* broker friends was approached by a Chinese guy who said, "I'm engaged in a construction project in Nairobi. I will give you US$2 million here in China. Can you get it to me in Nairobi?" My friend said, "Fine, no problem." And they did it—it was transferred on the phone—that's all it took. This Chinese guy is a legitimate businessman with a project in Africa—how else can he send the money? I'd say over half the money exchanged between East Africa and China is exchanged through these informal means. Almost every African country has some system like *hawala*.

If East African money-transfer systems can sometimes operate only by phone, Nigerian money transferring may involve couriers carrying money in suitcases across the world. I know one agent is in Hong Kong working between Nigeria and Guangzhou. The payer gives Nigerian *naira* in Lagos or Onitsha to his offices there; they then wire Hong Kong, and he gives the receiver U.S. dollars in Hong Kong, to be taken over the border into China. The money he gives to clients, some US$4 million per month, is almost entirely brought to him by couriers flying from Nigeria. He need not worry about police—what he is doing is legal in Hong Kong—but he does need to worry about robbery: his predecessor was robbed, and he has a video camera focused on the hallway that he continually keeps his eye on. He must make absolutely certain that the person coming to pick up the money is the right person; occasionally he turns away clients coming to pick up money.

One reason for the reliance on informal means of money exchange is that formal means don't allow developing world traders in. I was with a Sudanese trader in Hong Kong who sought to open an account for US$1.2 million at a leading bank and was rejected, blocked because of concerns about money laundering stemming particularly from the U.S. But the informal system always awaits with no such strictures.

The Canton Fair

The Canton Fair is an unbelievably massive assemblage of sellers of goods that meets twice a year. It consists of three different phases over several weeks and five main expo halls: one could spend all day at the fair and not pass the same booth twice. No one who sees it for the first time can fail to be staggered by how vast it

is—a monument to Chinese manufacturing. The Canton Fair is high-tech and glittering, and many buyers are from developed rather than developing world countries. However, some African and Arab traders also go, either when they have first arrived in Guangzhou and lack connections with suppliers or when they are in search of particular products not readily available in the malls and stalls of Xiaobei. Middlemen dislike the Canton Fair, because it makes their services unnecessary, since traders can hook up directly with manufacturers; but middlemen and traders alike urge caution. Some exhibitors are in fact middlemen pretending to be factory representatives, selling to unwary customers goods from others' factories; other exhibitors have factories that, in the words of a Brazilian entrepreneur, "might be in someone's backyard"—far shoddier than the fancy exhibits at the Canton Fair would reveal. As he said, "This hall looks nice. But you don't know what lies behind any of these stalls—it could be garbage. You must visit everything." His plan was to visit twenty exhibits at the fair, then five factories from among these exhibitors, and from those pick one to do business with and a second as backup: a wise strategy for seeing beneath the fair's splendor.

We went to the fair with a highly experienced East African trader seeking to source solar lighting. There were several suppliers we visited, negotiating for eight-meter poles, lighting units, and container shipping: two-year warranty, two hundred pieces. What impressed us most was the rapidity of the trader's judgments—he judged the craftsmanship of the products he saw in no more than thirty seconds—and also the wide variation of human responses. While some booths we went to greeted him attentively, with polished English-speaking salespeople, others ignored him and had staff who could not speak English despite the fact that the Canton Fair is geared toward foreign buyers. Our trader friend told us that if a given booth was not properly attentive to him, he would not do business with them even if their products were superb.

We also went to the fair on our own quest—I pretended to be an American businessman seeking to buy Chinese copy electronic goods and get them through Chinese customs and into the U.S., with Linessa and Yang posing as my interpreters. We talked to a customs official first, who said that we could take out some copy or knockoff goods and Chinese customs will treat it as our personal belongings. But Chinese customs would not allow the export of a larger number of copies; she would not tell us where exactly that threshold might lie between what was legal and what was not. We then spoke with a cargo agent. She said that she could help me ship copy goods back to the U.S. and could guarantee that my goods would reach the U.S., although I would have to deal with U.S. customs myself. Her openness was remarkable, since this was an official venue.

Figure 9. The Canton Fair (photo by Yang Yang)

We then spoke with a lawyer. He said that with electronic goods, the key was whether the consumer would likely be confused between the original and the copy. What this means, he implied, is that for a Chinese-made phone with an "Apply" or "Nokla" label, it would be legal. We then changed tack and went to a textile supplier; I asked her if she could have her factory make five thousand copies of a shirt design, and was told that, yes, they could, as long as it's not exactly the same as the original in design. I could make five thousand copies through my own brand with some slight changes from the original branded shirt and would be wholly safe and clear.

This all surprised us. We were well aware that copies were widespread in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi but had not realized the extent to which even at the Canton Fair they could be had. But the critical issue is that these are not copies—exact replicas of branded goods designed to look exactly like the original—but rather knockoffs, copies of designs with their own brand names. The former can be prosecuted but the latter cannot, unless the foreign maker of the original seeks to sue.

Copies and Knockoffs

Copies are common in Xiaobei. As a Central African trader and middleman told us:

> Around the world, things like drugs—if they catch you, they kill you. But with copy goods, all that can happen is that they'll take your goods. In my business, I have had copies confiscated more than five times. Once it was mobile phones. Another time it was ladies' bags—they found it in the warehouse before it was sent. Another time it was televisions. If you have the license, you can prove it's original. If you don't have the license, there's nothing you can do. No, they won't charge me with anything—they just check the goods and take them if they're fake goods. If they catch the seller of fake goods, those people are in trouble. But I'm not the seller—I'm just the buyer. I don't know if it's a copy! So you're safe, except that the goods may be confiscated.

There are not that many copy goods being bought and sent out of Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi; logistics agents estimate that no more than 10–20 percent of the goods their customers have sent by sea or air are copies in the sense of the term specified above. However, most of the goods sold in Xiaobei or Guangyuanxi are knockoffs, copying the style or design of a product, but are using a different brand name, or no brand name.

The number of copies being sold has significantly decreased in the last five years. One reason for this is technological—in pre-smartphone days, it was easy to make high-quality copy or knockoff phones at a fraction of their original price, but with smartphones, high-quality copies at very cheap prices are difficult to make.[5] A second reason is that Chinese goods themselves are becoming better, leading at least one trader in mobile phones we know to buy original Huawei phones rather than copies or knockoffs; this may be the wave of the future. A third reason is increased enforcement by Chinese agents; there are more government raids looking for copies, and so the pressure is somewhat greater not to buy or sell them. Some of the traders we know who deal in copies now send the labels of brand goods back home by air and send the goods themselves—the refrigerators or flat-screen TVs or other goods—by sea with no brand labels. They then have confederates back home affix the labels to the goods.*

*In this context, the line between copies and knockoffs is blurred. If a trader sends knockoffs of products such as televisions by container and sends product labels by air,

Copies are easy to detect: basically, any product leaving China with a well-known brand name, unless it is sent by the company owning or contracting out that brand, is a copy. Knockoffs are more difficult to detect. Whereas copies may be confiscated by Chinese customs agents, knockoffs pass through Chinese customs freely—the only way that knockoffs can be prosecuted is through lawsuits filed in Chinese courts by the company making the original, a time-consuming process that many foreign companies do not bother with. Knockoffs are in demand throughout the developing world because people in those countries want the goods of the developed world but can't pay developed-world prices. A Central African logistics agent described this very clearly to us:

> Gucci, Prada—Chinese can take the original and make something that looks exactly the same as those brands. Yes, I'm sending copies in my business. People want to buy good things, and the price is cheap. Chinese officials sometimes go to the warehouse to check for copies. But if there's no logo, it's no problem. You can see in the mobile phone market here iPhone 6, but Apple has only manufactured iPhone 5, and the writing is different from Apple's. Is this OK? If a customer came with a thousand copy iPhone 5s, would I take it? Of course! We're doing business! Everywhere you go, you need to respect the country's laws. But people bring it, so what can we do? And the ones who produce these goods are also Chinese.

The buyers of these goods are not just foreign but Chinese; in 2008, it was reported that 30 percent of the phones used in China were *shanzhai* (山寨), copies/knockoffs of original phones.[6] These circulate around the world, as American media reports proclaim.[7] In Guangzhou there are emporiums such as Watch City and Dashatou that sell vast numbers of copy electronic goods with impunity—there are occasional police raids, but these seem to have no effect on the pursuit of profit, at least in our visits. Just a few hours after a police raid, I expressed interest in buying copies wholesale and was ushered into a special storage room to look at multiple versions of copies of all different qualities and prices. I interviewed a private investigator in Hong Kong who works for American and European companies seeking to limit copyright infringement in China. He said that enforcement has become better in China than before, with the authorities seeking to shut down illegal factories in Shenzhen, but they are

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which are then affixed to the televisions in the countries in which they are to be sold, then the televisions are knockoffs until the label is affixed, after which, they become copies.

overwhelmed. His business is going to copy factories and gathering evidence to get them shut down; but this is all the more difficult in that some companies make original goods during regular business hours, then switch to making copies at other hours. The companies he works for realize full well that they can never stop piracy; all they can do is to put a temporary lid on it by hiring people like him to investigate and then initiating lawsuits that may or may not succeed.

One of our most interesting interviews was with a self-taught East African inventor of solar lighting systems. I asked him why he bothered inventing—wouldn't it be better for the impoverished rural consumers in his home country if he simply copied the solar lighting of other manufacturers, and then provided them to consumers at a cheaper price? Isn't his inventing merely a self-indulgence? He replied:

> So you're asking why do I bother inventing anything? Well . . . It gives me satisfaction to do it. Yes, copies help poor people—this is really the case. And copies are good things for my country. It used to be that Nokia phones with video cameras would be US$50. Now, because of Chinese copies, poor Africans can buy one for US$10. For the developing world, copies are everything; if there are no copies, you can't buy anything. All this is true, but still, I don't want to make copies. I want to develop my own brand, my own products. I wouldn't be proud of making copies. Just like you, one of my friends asked me, "Why do you spend so much time making your own inventions? There's a lot more money in copies!" I rejected that idea. . . . But every time, I have to worry about Chinese factories copying my design: that worry follows me like a shadow.

Unlike inventors from the developed world, who may be singularly proud of their inventions, this man from the developing world must explain why he seeks to invent rather than copy, considering the poverty-stricken state of many in his country. Importing copies may be not just a lesser evil, as some traders in this chapter imply, but a virtue, given their cheap prices. Copies of medicines may kill people; copies of electronic goods rob innovators of their just reward (even if these innovators are often so wealthy as to hardly need profits from the developing world). These objections are real, and yet copies also bring the desired goods of the developed world to the developing world at prices poor people can afford. But copiers don't only copy from the rich; this man himself must worry about having his brands copied.

As we saw last chapter, Chinese goods are often scorned for their poor qual-

ity. This is not necessarily the fault of Chinese manufacturers, who make all grades of knockoffs and copies, but of African buyers, who insist on the lowest possible price; but nonetheless, this bad reputation of Chinese goods remains. I went to Kenya in February 2014 to investigate Chinese goods, and was at several junctures told the same sour joke. A Kenyan woman falls in love with a Chinese man in Nairobi, who seeks to take her back with him to China. She tells her mother, who says, "Oh, my daughter: you are going off to China, a country very far away. But do what you must do." In Guangzhou, the woman becomes pregnant, and calls her mother to tell her. The mother says, "Oh, my daughter: you will have a baby in China, a country very far away. But do what you must do." Nine months later, the daughter calls her mother again: "Mother, I have terrible news. My baby was stillborn." The mother pauses for several moments, and then says, "I knew everything made in China was a fake."

Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years has had a GDP growth second in the world only to that of China,* and traders will no doubt keep bringing goods from China to reflect this growing affluence. In the 1980s and 1990s, sub-Saharan Africa was a major importer of secondhand clothing from Europe and the U.S.[8] Yang interviewed a Ghanaian trader who spoke of how buying new Chinese knockoffs and copies was a step up from this:

> The people of my country are tired of dumped goods, the secondhand stuff. Africans can afford to buy better products at a reasonable price range. We are no longer poor people begging for things that other people don't want. China provides an assortment of choices for brand-new products. What I do to bring in more Chinese goods is good for Africa. I am proud of what I do.[9]

And if these goods are copies or knockoffs, so be it.

Warehouse, Airport, and Customs

After goods have been bought from the supplier and warehoused, they are sent by sea or air. Typically machinery, bulk goods, and clothing are sent by sea; smaller

*This calculation changes from year to year; as of early 2016, China has undergone economic turmoil, and India's growth rate has surpassed China's; African nations have suffered because their GDP is dependent on China's hunger for raw materials. Nonetheless, we are in an economic era in which many developing countries' GDPs will continue, in their growth rates, to surpass those of developed countries.

electronic goods and mobile phones are sent by air. Most goods leaving China for Africa travel by sea in containers, a mode of transport that has revolutionized world trade over the past sixty years.[10]

Official figures concerning African trade in Guangzhou have increased extraordinarily in recent years, from around US$165 million in 1996 to US$2.1 billion in 2010.[11] These figures are revealing but are greatly understated. This is generally not because unregistered containers are being smuggled between China and Africa but rather because as a rule, goods are under-declared in customs by 40–70 percent to avoid paying fees. As a Nigerian trader told us, "The standard procedure is that if you buy parts for, say, 500 RMB each, you write them on the form as costing 200 RMB each. You're going to have to pay customs in any case, but minimize the price to lower the bill." A Kenyan trader said, "Everything has to be declared, even copies, though not as copies. If I'm sending an expensive brand of shoes, I'll just say 'shoes.' Yes, if everything is undervalued by 50 percent, then you have twice as much trade as officially declared."

Most small traders are dealing not in full containers but in palettes, small consignments. We went with a Nigerian trader of clothing to the warehouse to watch his goods being packed. After his clothes were put through the compressor—a machine whose purpose is to squash goods such as clothing into the smallest possible space—he estimated that they are at .4 cubic meters, and worth, when sold in the markets of Lagos, about US$4,000; a shipment will cost him US$50 to send. He said that he could pack about 3,000 dress shirts in one cubic meter, or 4,000 T-shirts, or 1,300 copy Levis jeans. He won a quick but vociferous argument with the Chinese worker in the warehouse: the worker sought to measure the volume of the goods before compression because it was dinnertime and he wanted to eat; the trader insisted that he do the measurement only after the goods were compressed.

Goods sent by container will last be seen by traders at the warehouse, before they are driven off in their containers to ports, whether in Guangzhou or Hong Kong. Goods sent by air will typically be left at logistics agents' offices. But many small traders use their own baggage allowances to send their goods. Baiyun Airport in Guangzhou resembles a warehouse by night, with traders carrying everything they possibly can and bargaining with airline personnel as to whether they can take their overloaded luggage on the plane. Many of the Africans there are handlers sending their customers off or taking goods to the airport to people who are taking others' goods back to Africa in their spare luggage allowance for a price, typically ten kilograms for US$50.

Small traders may go to the airport terrified both by customs and by airline

Figure 10. Baiyun airport boxes (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

regulations limiting their luggage weight. Linessa went to the airport with two West African traders who had bags, both hand luggage and check-in luggage, packed to bursting, full of men's shirts and other goods. Checked-in luggage will definitely be weighed, but carry-on luggage may not be. These traders finally went to the toilet to jettison several kilograms of luggage, a waste of their money, but at least it enabled them to board the airplane, granting them the wish expressed in their fervent prayers. Because customs officials and airline staff are variable in their enforcement, it may indeed seem to be a matter of God's will whether a trader is allowed past with a heavy bag or is stopped.

Chinese customs are in most respects law-abiding, except for dealing in copies. African and Arab logistics agents use Chinese brokers as facilitators to get copies through customs: typically these facilitators are former customs agents themselves. There are two alternative strategies that these agents take: one is to warn your Chinese broker in advance and pay a small amount; another is to take your chances and hope that the copies you're sending can get through without being intercepted. As an East African logistics agent told us, "Paying off Chinese customs in advance costs US$150 per three cubic meters. If you haven't paid in advance and you're caught, you're in trouble. Of course the money is going into officials' pockets! But copies are the only area where customs officials take

bribes in return for letting it go through." A Chinese former logistics agent added to this:

> No more than about 3 percent of containers will be inspected by Chinese customs. But when the government sets a campaign, they will inspect more, maybe 20–30 percent. If it's a container with a large number of copies, the customs broker will charge the customer in advance 3,000–4,000 RMB [US$450–$600] for one container depending on the percentage of copies in the container and the value of the goods. This depends on how famous the brand names are. Some customers will not tell the customs broker they are sending copies. In this case, if the container isn't inspected, fine; but if the container is inspected and the copy goods are found, all the fault will be the customer's. He'll need to pay 20,000 to 30,000 RMB to get his goods through. A strong customs broker, with lots of *guanxi* [connections] can make everything go through more smoothly; but still, if copies are found, there must be payment.

Chinese logistics agents are reputed to cheat their African customers with impunity since the latter have no idea how the former are doing their business. Some agencies give prices that are impossibly low. An East African logistics agent complained:

> Always customers come to us saying, "Look, you're charging US$4,500 per container. We have someone who will charge us only $3,000." But you've got to explain the consequences—these guys want to cheat you. The first container will go through, the second, but then the third you'll end up paying a lot. They'll say, "Customs has discovered copy goods in your container. You must pay $20,000 or your goods will be confiscated." You'll end up in the hands of those kinds of companies when you want to get goods through very cheap. In fact customs may have no link to this at all—it's the company that's cheating you—but how would the customer know this?

Bribery at customs occurs in China only to get copies through, but has been endemic in some African countries such as Kenya and Nigeria, although apparently much less so in countries such as Tanzania and Ethiopia. One exporter of shoes from China to Nigeria told us that he knows as a rule how much he will have to pay due to corruption at Nigerian customs: 50 percent of his profits as bribes. This is a large amount of money, but because other importers must pay

the same amount as he does, it is simply a business expense, no different in its effects than a fully legal levy upon his goods. Kenya is similar. When we asked a Kenyan cargo agent about paying off customs, he scoffed, "Paying off officials? It's part of the game. It's natural, from the beginning!" Corruption, he said, "is why one kilo of air freight costs US$8.50. It might be US$6 if we didn't have to worry about paying off customs officials. Even if you have all the legal things in place, someone will always try to arm-twist you. They won't miss a way of making it difficult for you unless you pay them something." As another trader told us:

> Kenya wants to have its own industries, so they try to restrict garments coming in from outside—they tax high. All you can do is bribe the customs officer. The officer will declare some amount and take some to go into his own pocket. If it's 1.6 million Kenyan shillings, he'll give 1 million to the government and take 600,000 for himself [1 Kenyan shilling is roughly US 1¢]. You can get rich if you work for customs in Kenya! Everybody wants to be a customs officer.

This is not to say that there isn't considerable effort to weed out corruption and copies in countries such as Kenya. In 2015, Kenya began a massive new campaign against copies, but the logistics agents in Guangzhou whom we know merely shrugged. "It's just one more added expense, one more official to pay off." We came to know a trader from an East African country who had been fired from his job as a customs officer for corruption. He said that every day, he had received as much money through bribes as he received through his monthly salary. In China, where he sought to make a second start for himself through trade, he was most notable for his complete refusal to make any under-the-table payments, to the great detriment of his profits: he had learned his lesson too late.

The Kenyan, Nigerian, and other customs regimes mentioned in this book are under multiple conflicting pressures and temptations: both the desire to meet international standards but also the enormous temptation to "take from the till," as are one's colleagues.[12] The willingness of customs officials to take bribes has only a partial relation to personal morality: much more, it is a matter of whether government workers in a given country are paid enough to make it plausible for them not to accept bribes, and also whether there is effective surveillance, making the receiving of bribes highly difficult. An American or Japanese or French customs agent would laugh at any trader offering them a hundred-dollar bribe. But if a million-dollar bribe were offered, and if detection seemed impossible, then there would no doubt be takers. Americans and Japanese are not more

moral than Kenyans and Nigerians. They simply have less necessity for and fewer opportunities to engage in corruption.

Accounts of Low-End Globalization

Khadar

Khadar is a Somali Kenyan trader in his forties with a stall in Eastleigh, Nairobi:

> I've been coming to China since 2007, four times a year. I buy women's clothing. I try my best to understand women's fashions—my wife, she's my manager. Muslims like me are a minority in Kenya—I buy for Christians. I have no problem buying sexy clothing even though I'm Muslim—it's business! I don't go to the factory in China—I go to markets, shops. Every week, the factory provides new samples and supplies them to the shops. My biggest surprise when I first came in 2007 was that my supplier ran out of the item I was ordering, and gave me other items instead—he cheated me. No, I never went back to that supplier! I did a course of business in college. I was told, "If you mistreat a customer, that customer will cause you to lose ten more customers." But now there's improvement—it's gotten better. I have a bank account here; I am able to wire money from Nairobi.
>
> Before, I had to pay bribes to get goods past customs in Kenya, but nowadays it's not happening. The current government charges us extremely and watches us fiercely! Getting discounts by bribing customs—we can't do it now. Western nations have cut economic aid to Kenya, so the only source of income the government has is through taxation, especially port taxation. Among police, corruption is very common. But not in customs at ports now; you can't do it. At Mombasa port, you have to pay 2 million Kenyan shillings per container (US$19,280), although it depends upon the goods—at least 1.4 million. This is all legal; this is what you have to do. The government has put pressure on customs to bring in income. I can't say it's 100 percent clean, but almost—the percentage is above 50 percent or 70 percent. But if the top leaders are corrupt, corruption can't be eliminated. Not at customs, but at many government offices, doors will only be opened if you pay.
>
> Businesspeople will do anything to lessen payment. They don't look to the side of government or society; they only look at their own interests. This is true for me too. Earlier, we were paying just 300,000 Kenyan shillings per

> container; we were supposed to pay 1.8 million. Now, I must pay 1 million-something. If an agent offered to let my container in for 800,000 Kenyan shillings, would I do it? Well—I couldn't trust him, because now there are other checkpoints as well. Now it's too dangerous to even try.

Khadar indicates that the Kenyan government is cracking down on corruption at customs, to the extent that it can, in that corruption prevents money from entering government coffers. There are some African countries that are true kleptocracies. However, most countries attempt to gain all the money they can from taxation, but can't, in that customs and other officials' salaries are so low that bribery is an ever-present temptation. One way around this is to make sure that government officials are always monitored and never alone. Traders like Khadar may abstractly prefer a clean government, but as businessman they dislike a clean government, because it robs them of profits. In the vast majority of cases, bribery at customs results in a lower rather than higher fee, and so as businessmen they prefer it, even though as citizens they may not.

David

David is an American solar lighting inventor based in San Francisco:

> My solar lights are designed in the United States, manufactured in south China, and sold throughout the developing world. I know that many copies of my goods are being sold in China. I invented this stuff—we filed the patents. I sue these makers of copies. We won a lawsuit in China recently and were awarded US$23,000. The reason we fight so hard for our design is that we want to protect the market that we're developing. If someone designs something that looks like a square box at half our price, that's totally their right. But if it looks like something patented by us, we want to do our best to stop it. Our patents don't just cover China; we've filed in many African countries. We tell our customers, "If you see knockoffs in your country, there's a good chance that we can be partners with you in a lawsuit against that company making copies." So if we can't stop them in China, we have a second firewall in Kenya, for example. The patents may be hard to enforce, but at least we have a fighting chance to go to the customs department with a Kenyan patent and say, "Block these imports." That's the selling point we offer.
>
> Sometimes you send a demand letter and the copiers stop; other ones you have to take to court. The Chinese government wants to be seen as an innova-

tion leader, so they say, "For any Chinese citizen who gets a patent, we'll reimburse you US$1,500." The filing fees are only about $800. So there's a whole bunch of people who watch the Internet for new products. They buy a sample or take the pictures off the website and get the Chinese patent for something they didn't invent, and make $700. . . . It's really expensive to file lawsuits in China—I was lucky to find a lawyer who was willing to take it on contingency. I've never lost a case in China—no, I haven't found Chinese courts to be in favor of Chinese against foreigners. I recently received court rulings against one company that was knocking us off. My lawyer said, "We won!" but I need to see the translation. The ruling can go so far as to require proof of the destruction of the tooling, going there with an acetylene torch and cutting the factory molds in half. But the reality is that tooling can be made again—if the company has customers coming to them, they'll just open another shop down the street. Anything that looks like our iconic design I want the copiers to steer clear of. But it's like Whack-A-Mole: you get one factory shut down and three more spring up. I'm just trying to torture the knockoff guys enough so that they go and knock off somewhere else.

I don't engage in any under-the-table stuff, but my in-country retailers may have to. I know there's always talk of needing "consulting fees," and I don't know how that gets divvied up; it costs real money to get our goods into country a lot of times. There's a hell of an opportunity for anyone who can understand how to reliably bring products into country X. The big movers don't touch Africa—it's too complicated for them. We always need to get our products to be cheap enough to meet the market in African and other developing world countries. In the long run, African consumers will win out if they buy our products, but in the short run, the Chinese copies, with all their bad quality, are cheaper. This is the biggest problem we face, even more than copying; we have to educate the consumer in the different countries we sell in.

David is trying to make the world a better place while also making a profit through his solar lighting systems. He has two problems. First, his goods are so easily copied—in a mall in Guangzhou, we saw three different stalls selling what seemed to be copies of his goods. He can fight these with lawsuits, which, remarkably, he wins in China; but he admits that he really can't defeat the copiers but only hold them at bay for a while. Second, his goods, designed in the U.S., are inevitably of higher cost than those coming from China. He attempts to educate African consumers as to the quality of his goods, but still, the typical consumer in a developing world market, seeing his goods and knockoffs at a frac-

tion of their price, will choose the latter; quality is a vague ideal for most African consumers, as opposed to the hard reality of immediate cost. And still he plugs on, with a degree of global success.

Abdul

Abdul is a trader from a Middle Eastern country who takes orders for copy and knockoff goods from customers back home and gets them made in Chinese factories.

> I took orders for jackets from my home country for copies of an American brand that cost US$250. I produced them with almost the same design but changed the name. My price is 250 RMB. It's the same price, but their price is in dollars and mine is in RMB, six times cheaper! I'm not worried about copyright and getting sued, because the design is a little different. I just got the idea from the American company.
>
> European and American brands have very good materials, very good designs, very high prices. The Chinese use cheap materials and cheap workers and make a very similar brand, with only a different name. In America and Europe it's expensive to produce, but in China it's very cheap! The first world doesn't care about what the third world needs. That's why so many people from the third world have come here, to China. But if China prices get higher, then maybe third world people will change the countries they go to. Before, it was 2,500 RMB per month to pay workers here, but now it will become 5,000 RMB. The first world is putting pressure on China to do this.
>
> Look: here's a watch whose original would go for US$25,000. This is an extremely good copy [knockoff], and it goes for US$600–700. Who would be crazy enough to buy an original? In Eastern Europe, every young man wants a watch like this to give to his girlfriend, to make her a beautiful lady. And this is the same as the original, except for the brand name. For the flight attendants who carry this back into Eastern Europe, it's easy money.

Abdul's account shows that while Chinese companies make knockoffs or copies, they sometimes do it at the behest of foreign traders; he orders it and the Chinese factories make it. Abdul is the kind of trader whom David is fighting against. If Abdul had a customer who sought cheap knockoffs of David's goods, he would not have the slightest compunction about providing them, although solar lights are probably not lucrative enough for Abdul to deal in. Abdul has no

moral scruples about what he does. In his view, "the first world doesn't care about what the third world needs," and so he goes to China to provide such goods for his country—and to make a tidy profit for himself. We sought to get David and Abdul to a restaurant to share dinner—despite their opposing positions in global chains of production, they probably would have liked each other. But this, unfortunately, never happened.

Low-End Globalization's Circuits

While this book emphasizes the practice of low-end globalization in Guangzhou, Guangzhou is only one of many global nodes. Traders buy goods in Guangzhou, but also in Yiwu, Guangzhou's major rival in China for the goods of low-end globalization; beyond China, they buy textiles in Bangkok and an array of goods in Dubai. The goods that traders send back travel a route from Guangzhou to Hong Kong (very often), to Dubai, to Middle Eastern and African ports, where they are trucked to inland cities. In this section, I briefly describe six nodes of low-end globalization's circuits: Yiwu, then Bangkok, Istanbul, Dubai, and Nairobi, where I visited in 2014–2015, and Accra, where Linessa visited in late 2013.

Linessa and I reached Yiwu from Guangzhou via a seventeen-hour ride on a bus with no seats but rather bunk beds with pillows and sheets. Half the people on the bus were African—unlike trains and planes, the bus does not require that a passport be shown when a ticket is bought, making it a useful mode of transport for overstayers. There were Chinese thieves on the bus waiting to go through the luggage of anyone who ventured to the overflowing toilet—only Linessa's sharp eyes prevented me from getting robbed. The world of foreigners in Yiwu is small; the area of hotels and restaurants where foreigners congregate, called Binwang, or alternatively, Maeda, named after the largest Arab restaurant in the area, is only a few square blocks. Within this area, we met Nigerian, Kenyan, and Arab traders, as well as several Columbian sex workers. We ran into our Kenyan friend Maggie in Yiwu; in all of the sites described in this section we met by plan or by chance traders we'd known in Guangzhou.

A central area for trade in Yiwu is the International Trade Mart, a vast place a little like the Canton Trade Fair, but year-round, a building of five stories with more than eight thousand shops in twenty-nine portals, each devoted to different kinds of goods. Maggie buys clothing and handbags in Guangzhou and kitchen utensils and other domestic items in Yiwu. As a small trader, she was treated rudely at most of the stores we went to. Their ideal customer seemed to be someone in a suit with a name card, a representative of a big company ordering twenty

thousand or fifty thousand pieces, rather than a walk-in customer like Maggie, asking at every store we visited what the minimum was that she could buy wholesale. The stores—factory outlets—would typically tell her two hundred or three hundred pieces with a degree of disdain. A woman in one store, when asked how much an item cost, did not even look at Maggie, but punched a number into her mobile phone and wordlessly showed its display. Maggie fumed, "They don't know how to treat their customers here!"

Linessa and I both went to different stores posing as customers in our T-shirts and daypacks and were similarly treated with indifference; it seems that Maggie was treated poorly not just because she was African and female but also because she was a small player. She eventually found a store that required a ten-carton minimum not of a single good but of anything in the store; she had found a place she could deal with. How Yiwu—at a considerable distance from Guangdong Province, where so many factories are located—managed to become a major site of low-end globalization is not fully clear; but in any case, it is the one place in China, other than Guangzhou, that almost all traders engaged in low-end globalization know. As Maggie's experience illustrates, however, some of the merchants of Yiwu yearn to be engaged not in low-end but in high-end globalization, no doubt because it can bring them magnitudes more money.[13]

Bangkok is renowned among traders as a site to buy textiles of a higher quality and price than those sold in Guangzhou. The key area for traders is Pratunam, around the Baiyoke Sky Hotel. Of the textiles sold in East Africa, 20–30 percent come not from China but from Bangkok. According to a logistics agent in Bangkok, a man deeply familiar with the global textile trade, "Bangkok has better designs, made almost purely of cotton. . . . Many times, traders take goods made here and try to make copies in China. But they fail, because the quality is higher here. Thailand shipping warehouses don't use compressors because compressors lower the quality of the textiles; the material and appearance change." From Thailand, only a small number of containers of clothing are sent to East Africa as compared to Guangzhou. "They might send a hundred out of Guangzhou, but less than forty out of Bangkok. This is because more African people want cheap goods. People in Nairobi, only 10 percent can afford to buy these high-quality goods." Indeed, Thai fabrics are 30–40 percent more expensive than fabrics coming from China. In handling these fabrics, the difference is immediately apparent. At markets in East Africa, even a consumer as obtuse as I could tell instantly by touch what clothing was made in Thailand. While Chinese copies of electronic goods were readily available in Thai markets, Chinese copies of Thai fabrics were inferior and were rejected.

Istanbul is another site for alternative goods from those made in China. At

the Canton Trade Fair, a Turkish trade representative told us, frankly, that "we're making copies [knockoffs] just as the Chinese are. But our quality is better. The quality of Turkish goods is better than China, but the price is cheaper than Europe." Indeed, many people in the Arab world and elsewhere who may disdain Chinese goods desire Turkish goods, signifying, for them, Europe. Like fabrics in Bangkok, the goods bought by traders in Istanbul—typically men's suits and shoes, but also baby products and heavy machinery—are seen as better but more expensive than those made in China. An East African logistics agent with an office in Istanbul told me, "Most East African traders won't come here. They always go for the cheapest goods, buying in bulk—they'll be in China." He said that each month, his company might send just seven to ten containers to Kenya, with 95 percent of the goods in those containers original, as opposed to the thirty or so containers his company might send from China, with 70 percent of the goods original (by which he meant knockoffs but not actual copies). I asked him about copies, since there had been extensive news reports about Turkish copy goods,[14] and he replied (with remarkable honesty, since I had never met him before):

> Turkey has copies, but they're high quality copies. You can put just a few copies, two, three, five, or ten pieces, and divide them up into different boxes, but you can't send them in bulk. You can't do a hundred pieces of this, a hundred pieces of that, like you can in China. If Turkish customs discover even one copy, the entire shipment will be confiscated. Yes, I sometimes put two or three pieces of copies for customers, wrapped up with other goods—they won't notice. But it's different from China, where copies are everywhere. If you want a copy of Turkish goods, send it to China and get many copies made, and then send it back to Africa. Yes, you can get suits made here, and then put the brand on back in Africa. But businessmen are always in a hurry, they want everything done in one place. China-made copies are quicker and cheaper—you can pack many more copies in China than you can in Turkey! We traders are always looking for people we can pay off—we look for loopholes—but there's not much of a loophole here in Turkey.

It takes forty days to get goods from Turkey to Kenya because of delays in getting containers through the Red Sea; thus there is little advantage in terms of time if a trader ships goods from Turkey. Turkey is a niche market. It represents a step closer to high-end globalization than China—this may perhaps be China in ten or fifteen years, if China's economic growth and legal structures continue on their current path.

If Istanbul seems on the periphery of low-end globalization, Dubai is at its center. Dubai, unlike Bangkok and Istanbul, has a huge array of China-made goods for sale, including copies; African traders have a choice of going to Dubai or going to Guangzhou. As one recent paper put it, "Who needs China when you have Dubai?"[15] Some traders come to Dubai because they can't get a visa into China; other traders alternate between Dubai and China. Others are Dubai regulars: "This is where my business is. Why would I want to go to China?" a Tanzanian trader asked me. He has been back and forth between Dar-es-Salaam and Dubai some twenty times over five years. Other traders dream of going to China but don't yet have the connections; they may think of China as foreign and distant, unlike Dubai, and yet also see it as enticing because of the fortunes that can potentially be made there. More than at any other site, traders in Dubai asked me about business in China, repeatedly attempting to enlist me as a business partner.

Dubai at large looks a bit like Los Angeles, or even Las Vegas. But Deira—the area of Dubai where developing world traders go—is an exception to the rest of the territory: narrow alleys filled with small wholesale shops and decrepit hotels. Everything is available here wholesale, within two hundred yards of its central artery, Al Sabkha Street. Emiratis make up less than 20 percent of the population of the United Arab Emirates, of which Dubai is a part, and so foreigners do much of the work, including selling the goods of low-end globalization. Ethiopians and Kenyans make up a significant part of the menial labor workforce in Dubai, but the merchants dealing to African traders in Deira are often Indian, culturally well known to East African traders. There is a large Chinese goods mall, called the Dragon Mart, but the traders I met in Dubai do not go there—they spend their time in Deira instead.

The expensive but run-down hotel I stayed in had a warehouse next door for traders to store the goods they bought. This makes sense in the context of Dubai, in that most traders are buying already-manufactured goods, typically Chinese in origin, that have been brought to Dubai for the Middle Eastern and African markets, at higher prices than can be found in Guangzhou. The fact that goods are already manufactured means that transactions are quick—the trader can buy the goods and go home, rather than waiting for a factory to produce them. It also means that cheating is less likely. Factories have no chance to make goods of inferior quality as compared to the samples brought by the trader: what the trader sees is generally what the trader gets. One problem traders face in Dubai is the lack of a wide variety of goods as compared to Guangzhou—for a trader seeking to introduce a new product back home, Dubai is less enticing than

Guangzhou—but compared to Bangkok and Istanbul, the selection of Chinese goods for re-export is vast.

I met in Dubai not just Tanzanians and Kenyans but also Angolans, Nigerians, Congolese, and Ghanaians, among other traders. Because there is a Muslim presence in much of Africa, Deira did not seem foreign to them, as Guangzhou does. A trader can buy goods in China for considerably less than what it costs in Dubai—sometimes as little as half as much—but there are disadvantages. It takes as long as sixty days to get a container from Guangzhou to many central African cities, but only fifteen days to get a container from Dubai to those cities. During that time, the trader's investment is frozen. To go to China, the trader needs a bigger initial investment and the capital to wait a longer time; the quicker turnover time in Dubai means that the trader's money is much less at risk. There is also the kind of goods a trader is dealing in. It makes more sense to ship used cars out of Dubai; there are few used cars in China, but many UAE drivers get rid of their cars after six months, making it easy to procure such cars. The traders and logistics agents who know both Dubai and China told me that Dubai is in many respects easier for business than China: English can be used and cheating is relatively uncommon. Nevertheless, they said, it is generally better to do business in China, simply because in Dubai, "everything is made elsewhere" and a good businessperson seeks to buy at the source. The number of African traders in Deira has apparently declined in recent years, with many Africans instead going to China; but Deira remains an alternative to China for many traders and a central node of low-end globalization.

Proceeding to Africa, there is Eastleigh, a Somali neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya.[16] Eastleigh was never planned as a commercial area and grew by accident through Somali commercial acumen, despite having no sewage or water or urban amenities until recently. Yet the money there is extraordinary. An East African trader in Guangzhou said that all his brothers and sisters are in the United States, but as for himself, he'd rather be in Eastleigh, which he described as "Wall Street on steroids" because of the sheer amount of money passing through. Another trader, who had lived in Canada, contrasted the regulated capitalism he encountered there with the situation he finds in Eastleigh:

> In Canada, it's extremely difficult to do business. I tried to start a small business there, but there's so much you have to do. If you want to be a shoe polisher, you have to get training in shoe polishing; if you want to be a grocer, you have to get training in grocering. It's crazy! There's too much bureaucracy! Here it's different—if you're good, you'll attract customers, that's all.

Figure 11. Eastleigh (photo by Gordon Mathews)

Amal Plaza is a rather unassuming building in Eastleigh, filled with tiny clothing stalls. As still another trader said, "If I were to sell my stall now, I could get US$160,000; that's how much my neighbor sold his stall for."[17] These stalls are little more than five by five feet, and yet, because this Eastleigh market is the center of clothing sales for East Africa, with customers coming not just from Kenya but also Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and South Sudan, it is absolutely buzzing with commerce and profit. Amal Plaza is a market with Christian customers: Somali women in black chador sell skimpy clothing to Kenyan women dressed in equally skimpy attire, but in this Muslim stronghold, this is no cause for conflict. One clerk at Amal Plaza said, "Yes, it's a problem for Muslim men to see women dressed in a sexy way; but you know, Kenya is a Christian country, so you have to be patient. No one in Eastleigh will tell those Christian buyers not to come here."

Culturally, Eastleigh is a combination of fevered capitalism, fervent Islam—with mosques and Islamic bookstores everywhere—and a cityscape from the western United States, with three of its bigger restaurants featuring hamburgers and looking like 1950s diners at one or two removes. Eastleigh is extraordinarily lucrative, but also, by many accounts, dangerous. While I was there, bomb warnings were sent out by the Kenyan government via mobile phone. Al Shabaab, the Somali terrorist organization, had been engaging in raids in Kenya, including the Westgate shopping mall attack of 2013, in response to the earlier Kenyan incursion into Somalia; Eastleigh, the Somali center of Nairobi, was an obvi-

ous source of suspicion. Police were everywhere. One Somali trader said, "The Kenyan police, even if you have an ID or a passport, they don't care. They just want money. If you refuse to pay, they'll say that you are Al Shabaab and lock you up." I was staying at a hotel frequented by Somali politicians and was told by the guard at the door, "If the police ask you for money, don't pay. We have to pay, but you shouldn't have to." Many Somalis in Eastleigh don't have a Kenyan ID card, which takes ten years to acquire, and many are asylum seekers, susceptible to police persecution.

There are apparently gangs active at night, unmolested by police. "They have knives—they kill you and take your phone," Somali traders claimed. They are said to be youth sent by their Somali parents in the United States back to their homeland to learn proper Islam who have instead become, on the basis of their American socialization, it is claimed, criminals. I got off a bus in an area in Eastleigh I didn't recognize. I walked for half a mile or more; several people were shouting, mockingly, "Are you lost?" as if a prelude to my getting robbed. I was negotiating with a driver wanting to charge an exorbitant price for a ride back to my hotel when a young woman in a black chador appeared, saying, "Follow me, I'll take you back." It turned out that she was in college in the U.S. and her Somali immigrant parents sent her to Eastleigh for a more Islamic education. As we were walking, several Somalis shouted, as she told me, "Why are you walking with a man?" or "Why are you walking with a white man?" After that, I walked ten paces behind her, silently. After forty minutes, we reached my hotel; she discreetly waved goodbye without looking back.

In Eastleigh, aside from such modest adventures, I spent most of my time at cargo offices, talking with traders and agents about their business. There are 6 cargo companies sending goods from Guangzhou to Eastleigh, some 120 containers each month in all: largely clothing, but also furniture, shoes, and building materials as well as electronic goods and home appliances. Goods from Thailand and Turkey too, come in, but on a much smaller scale than China. There are also goods from India and Malaysia; but 60 percent of the goods sold in Eastleigh come from China, I was told. A Somali-Kenyan logistics agent from Guangzhou, serving as my host in Eastleigh, confided, "Many of the guys we saw today in the office—they envy me: they'd like to be in China. There's one guy who tells me every day in the office, 'I need to go to China, but I have no passport.' I say, 'If you can get a passport, you can go.'" But for a Somali in Kenya, that passport, enabling the passage to China, may seem no more than a distant mirage.

There is Accra, Ghana, where Linessa traveled, one of the largest consumer markets for China-made products in West Africa. Sea shipments are sent by

container from Guangzhou to Lagos, Nigeria, and then trucked from Nigeria to Benin to Togo, and finally to Accra, taking forty days of transport time in all. Linessa's Ghanaian friend Gary was driving to Togo to arrange his shipment of clothes to be trucked from Lomé, Togo, to Accra. The clothes were shipped from Guangzhou over a month earlier and were expected to reach Lomé in the next several days. He could have ordered the clothes to be shipped to Accra directly from Guangzhou, but it would have taken more time, since there are many more frequent ships from Guangzhou to Lagos. The Ghana-Togo border immigration officers are well aware of this trucking route, and pocket the equivalent of a U.S. dollar or two from each driver to enable the truck to pass through without being detained.

Gary buys new clothes from Guangzhou every three to four months, sometimes going there himself and sometimes relying on his friend, a Ghanaian trader based in Guangzhou. When he gets the clothes in Accra, he delivers them to his aunt's warehouse in the center of Accra and informs his old customers of the new shipment. He also delivers his goods to a nearby city where he has a shop and to various places around the country—he delivers goods to his customers in his secondhand Ford bought from Hong Kong. As Gary told Linessa, in his last trip he bought four thousand shirts in Guangzhou for 15 RMB each; he sold them in Ghana for 15 Ghanaian cedi. Fifteen RMB was then worth 5.8 cedi; he could earn 32,000 cedi (US$13,562) if all four thousand shirts were sold. Each shipment generally can be sold within three months, although sometimes a particular product will not sell out. While Linessa was with him, Gary told a new trader that if she could fully sell a single suitcase of wigs that she carried from Guangzhou, her profit would cover her roundtrip air ticket.

Chinese products can be shipped and distributed to local sellers in a personal way, as Gary does, following the practices of low-end globalization, or they can be shipped in larger quantity by Chinese merchants in major markets, such as the Makola market in downtown Accra, with all kinds of China-made products to be found, from clothes to handbags to scissors to sanitary pads. There are Chinese merchants in the streets surrounding the Makola market selling shoes made by their factories back home. Most Ghanaian street vendors selling shoes in Makola buy from these Chinese shops, although Linessa met several Ghanaian vendors who claimed that their shoes were bought not from Chinese in Makola but from the Nigerian markets of Guangyuanxi.

Unlike some of the African traders we met in Guangzhou who were concerned that Chinese merchants in Africa will eventually be replacing Africans in China, the Chinese in Ghana whom Linessa spoke with did not see African

Figure 12. Makola market, Accra (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

traders in China as competing with them. Chinese are typically doing large-scale business, whether family based, such as the shoe merchants with factories back in China, or state owned. A Chinese employee of a shoe company told Linessa that his company can sell two hundred to three hundred shipping containers' worth of shoes each year in West Africa, a far larger amount than African traders bring in. But he noted that some of these shoes won't sell when fashions change. As he said, "Our factory produces shoes especially for Africans. But Africans have a 'special taste' in fashion that's different from the Chinese. I can't understand it." All in all, despite the increasing number of Chinese in Africa, there is a margin left for Africans to do sourcing and trading in China, since they know African consumer needs and market trends, this man maintained. African traders are more flexible than Chinese companies in adjusting their trading strategies, since they are dealing in much smaller quantities of products. Linessa found from her time in Ghana that business opportunities are still driving Ghanaians to China—although how long that will continue to be the case in the future remains an open question.

FIVE

Legal-Illegal in Guangzhou

Two Paths, Legal and Illegal

Probably the major dividing line among traders in Guangzhou—more important than nationality or religion or skin color—is legality: whether a person is legally in China or not. This is often an intensely private matter. Several times we went to visit a friend at his workplace, only to find that he had been taken by the police to jail to await deportation. Not only were we not allowed to visit him in jail, we, along with many of his other friends, hadn't even known of his illegality until one day he simply vanished. Once someone is in jail in China, there is no public notification; you can't know that someone is in jail, nor can you know where and for how long they are jailed. Overstayers in jail eventually manage to telephone someone outside, but for all intents and purposes they have vanished, at least for several weeks. Like much else in China, there was no definitive information, both because different individual police and different jurisdictions proceeded in different ways, and also because what was written down was in Chinese, unknowable to most Africans, and was in any case not actually followed. Rumor, as in so many other areas, was paramount.

Almost all traders come legally to China—we know of no one

who slipped into China without documentation, although this is certainly possible to do from places like Hong Kong—but while most scrupulously adhere to visa regulations, sometimes paying large sums of money or leaving China every month in order to renew their visas, others let their visa renewals expire and become illegal. One reason traders do this is because they are in the middle of negotiations over a shipment and have no logistics agent or middleman they can fully trust. They feel they must overstay their visa or they might lose all their money. As one trader put it, "The Chinese company might tell you the goods will be ready in seven days, but then the goods aren't ready. They can't force you to go without inspecting your goods! So you overstay." A second reason traders become overstayers is that the renewal of one's visa may seem prohibitively expensive. A third is that a trader who is a middleman does not want to lose customers; as one middleman said, "If you go back to Africa to renew your visa, your phone will be switched off, and your customers can't find you—they may find another supplier. You've got to stay in close touch with your customers," and this may mean overstaying.

Overstayers come in all nationalities: We have known of overstayer Yemenis, Ugandans, Gabonese, and Kenyans, among others, and we also know of Americans, Europeans, and Japanese who are working illegally, even if they are not overstayers. But the most common nationality of overstayers is Nigerian, and particularly Nigerian Igbos; in Guangyuanxi, the Nigerian stronghold of commerce in Guangzhou, it seems that a majority of shopkeepers in 2013 were overstayers, perhaps as many as 80 percent. Why Nigerian Igbos in particular? One reason is simply that there are so many Nigerians. Many traders have said that Nigerians are the largest nationality in Guangzhou, so of course among them will be overstayers. A second, more specific reason, is that Nigerians seem to have a particularly difficult time renewing their visas. In one overstayer's words, "For you to extend your visa, the immigration agents ask for 20,000 RMB for six months. I couldn't pay that—it's too much. Some countries are on China's blacklist: Nigeria is one of them. That's why it's so expensive." Whether Nigeria is indeed on China's unstated immigration blacklist is impossible to say; but it does seem clear that Nigerians report having to pay much more than other nationalities to renew their visas.

Another cultural factor also is at work. Haugen notes of Nigerian overstayers in Guangzhou that "lack of business success can eventually keep migrants from returning because of the social expectations to accumulate wealth abroad,"[1] and this is what we too have found, in contrast to other ethnicities and nationalities in Guangzhou. As a Kenyan trader told us, "If my visa weren't renewed, I would

just go home. I don't know why they stay and become illegal." A Nigerian overstayer made this reason clear when he said, "Every Igbo man knows the value of money, so that he will have something to say when he gets back home. Your parents and relatives will be there, people who took care of you when you were nothing. You want to show that you have grown, to be able to put a smile onto their faces." Another said:

> Yes, if you've been gone for some time and come back, you have to have something that will justify your being away. The drug guys, they make a lot of noise. They stay in big hotels back home, they fuck everything, they shut up the police with money. They intimidate people with money. So for you not to be intimidated, you have to have money too—if they come up with a Lamborghini, at least come up with a little Datsun. They live in their mansion, but I have my two-bedroom apartment. Yes, there's always temptation—people always want more. Here, if someone is doing badly, they will not willingly go home. Never.

East Africans tell us that their family would be happy to see them whether they have "made it" or not, but for many Igbos, masculine pride seems to dictate that they cannot go home empty-handed. Their calculation seems to be that the shame of being an overstayer in China is more bearable than the shame of not being "a big man" back home. In our interviews, Nigerian Igbos, unlike people of other nationalities, generally did not try to hide their overstayer status—since most were overstayers, it would be odd to pretend that one was not—but this was for no one a status to be proud of.

There is considerable anger among many Nigerians we spoke with as to why they are pursued for being overstayers. As one trader said, "There are so many Chinese in Nigeria who are not harassed by the Nigerian government. Why is the Chinese government doing this to us?" Another trader said to Yang, "We make money from our own people. We make African money. We never steal jobs from the Chinese. In fact, we create jobs for the Chinese. So why don't the Chinese leave us alone?"[2] Still another trader maintained to us that the reason the Chinese government is so angry at Nigerian Igbos is that they are so good in business: "Chinese merchants can easily cheat Congolese and Kenyans, but they can't easily cheat Nigerian Igbos." We pointed out to him that no government in the world fully tolerates illegal immigrants. Our question is instead, why did the Chinese government apparently begin pushing Nigerians into becoming overstayers by making visa renewals so difficult? One possibility is that the other nationalities went back home when their visas expired, and the Chinese government assumed

that the Nigerians would go back too, but they didn't. Another possibility is that Nigerians are indeed on an informal blacklist and are deliberately selected to have to pay high prices for visas.

There has been a history of friction and protest between Nigerian Igbo residents of Guangzhou and the authorities. In 2005, the pastor of a prominent Nigerian church was expelled from China for refusing to submit to the Chinese authorities in his church teachings (see chapter 7). In mid-July 2009, a local Guangzhou police station was surrounded by a hundred African protestors after a Nigerian man without a visa fled and sustained grave injuries and died according to some news reports but not others.[3] In 2012, a new immigration law was set forth in China, in order to combat *sanfei* (三非), the "three illegals" of illegal entry, illegal residence, and illegal work.[4] The law came into force in July 2013, and in August of that year, a massive crackdown on overstayers began, with daily police raids in Guangyuanxi and hundreds of overstayers arrested in the ensuing months, changing the tenor of African trade in Guangyuanxi, and in Guangzhou as a whole.[5] But before exploring this, I examine the visa worries of Africans and Arabs at large in Guangzhou, for they are all in danger of becoming overstayers.

Visa and Passport Worries, Jail, and Deportation

All African traders need to worry about visas in order to get their goods sent out before their visas expire; there is pervasive uncertainty, especially because it has become increasingly difficult to renew one's visa through a quick train trip to Hong Kong. An East African, in conversation with a Chinese official and his son at a small meeting we organized on Chinese-African communication, said, "The most important way to make life better for Africans in Guangzhou is to liberalize visas. Allow Africans to come in more easily to do business." His Chinese interlocutor said, "It's the same problem when Chinese want to go to America; they can't get a visa. . . . It's easy if a Chinese wants to go to Africa. But most Chinese would much rather get a visa to the U.S." As a general rule, the richer a country is, the harder it is to get and renew a visa. Rich countries want to keep people from poorer countries out, or at least to allow them in for a minimal period; but this fact hardly alleviates the discontent felt by many Africans.

In Guangzhou, as elsewhere in China, a passport or, for a Chinese citizen, a Chinese ID card, is essential to always have at hand. Every hotel I stayed at in Guangzhou, however decrepit or informal, required a passport, without which I couldn't get a room. One of Yang's Nigerian Igbo interviewees said:

> [The police] require everything to be registered with my passport. . . . When I find a house to live in, they need my passport. When I rent a shop, they want my passport. You Chinese are *máfan* [troublesome]. So many Chinese in my country [Nigeria] and we never give them *máfan*.[6]

In this situation, losing one's passport would be a nightmare. A Kenyan logistics agent said, "All the time, I have to worry about my passport. More than anything else! If I leave my jacket somewhere for two minutes, the passport will go," taken by thieves. Because there is no Kenyan consulate in Guangzhou, getting a new passport would be a long and involved process for him, one that would render him for the interim illegal.

Inside one's passport, it is essential to have a visa that has not expired. Many traders come to China on visas allowing them up to thirty days. If they stay in residences rather than hotels, they must register with police within twenty-four hours of their arrival, and if they don't, they face fines or jail. As a Kenyan logistics agent said:

> Last night my friend called me—I had to go and pay 2,000 RMB for him; they'll put you in jail if you don't pay. He had a one-year visa, but he hadn't registered. He has to go to Hong Kong every month to renew his visa, and every time you do that, you have to go to the police in Guangzhou and re-register. What's the use of having a one-year visa if you have to do this? Some countries are favored—Sudanese and Angolans have to register only once every six months. But we have to do it every month. Kenya's good relation with China has just begun, so. . . .

Before their visas expire, traders can simply go home, as most do if their business has been concluded, and apply for a new China visa from their home countries; or they can go to Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, or Thailand, where they can find agents specializing in obtaining China visa renewals. This can be a grueling, nerve-wracking process. If a visa extension is denied, it can mean the end of one's business career in China, as in Linessa's account of a trader from Niger:

> Amir went to apply for a visa extension in Guangzhou on September 3, 2013, one day before his visa in China was to expire. He had expected to get a one-month visa extension, but the Guangzhou immigration official who dealt with the application told Amir that they would only extend the visa until Septem-

> ber 10. His friend gave him several suggestions: go to Malaysia or Macau and apply for a new visa to China, or try to extend again at Guangzhou immigration on September 10, or go back to his home country to apply for a new visa. When Amir went back to the Guangzhou immigration office the next day to collect his passport, he was told that his visa wasn't ready and he should come back in a week. He was happy to hear that because he felt that it meant he would be able to get a one-month visa—Chinese immigration would not ask him to leave as soon as they gave him the visa, he reasoned. But when he went to collect his passport on September 9, he found that immigration would allow him to stay only until September 10. His friends suggested that he try to go to Macau or Hong Kong and try to get a fake "short ticket" to pretend he was going to a third country, departing from Macau or Hong Kong. He tried to go to Hong Kong at the Lo Wu border but was rejected. Amir thus had two choices—either he could buy a real flight ticket and return to Niger or becomes an overstayer in Guangzhou. He was consumed with worry over his choice and could not eat or sleep.

He eventually decided to go back to Niger; we never heard from him again.

Others are able to obtain multiple-entry visas allowing them to remain in China for up to a year as long as they leave and re-enter China once every thirty days; these people typically travel to the Macau or Hong Kong border to do this, completing the process in just as much time as it takes them to cross the border and come back. But as was the case with Amir, the authorities in Hong Kong or Macau may not let the trader in. A Ugandan we know spoke of the difficulties she has in leaving China every thirty days:

> It's a one-year, multiple-entry visa, but with thirty days for each stay. I can't go to Hong Kong, because they denied me entry. I can't go to Macau either. So I go to Thailand, but it costs a lot of money; I buy shoes. I can make some money, but it's not easy. Very many people here in Guangzhou have decided to overstay because otherwise they have to spend all their money on renewing their visa. By the time they want to go home, they have nothing. I don't want to be like that.

The one-year visa that some Africans get is ideally a business visa or student visa. A business visa requires a letter of invitation from a Chinese company, and a student visa requires a formal enrollment at an institution of higher learning. There has been a traffic in fake documents—agents selling multiple copies of let-

ters of invitation, for example—but there has also been a significant tightening of these standards, although we met more than a few traders with student visas who spend little time in the Chinese-language classes that provided them visas.

Many of the traders we know are in China on tourist visas; this enables them to buy goods but not to legally work. Those with a tourist visa who manage a stall or who are in an office may be detained not because they are overstayers but because they are illegally working. Several African merchants we know said that because work permits were expensive, they couldn't get one; 40,000 RMB was one figure we heard as the price for obtaining a work permit through an agent. Most of the African entrepreneurs we know worked while holding a tourist visa but feared that the police might show up and simply cancel their visas or rip them up, as apparently sometimes happens.

A Kenyan middleman said that his tourist visa was fine for work: "Chinese immigration realizes that we contribute to Sino-Africa business. If I'm not here now, all those suppliers won't be able to deal with African customers. They recognize that—they know I can't be a tourist all these months!" But other traders report that their contribution to Sino-African trade is not appreciated by immigration. A West African trader told us:

> I have a six-month visa for China. But I don't know if I can get it again. The guy at immigration told me, "Why not go back to your country?" I said, "I can't go back to my country. I have business here. Many Chinese people remain in my country [so I should be able to stay here]." He said, "That's not our problem."

The extent to which immigration practices bear any relation to economics—whether the African entrepreneurs' contribution to Guangzhou's and China's economy was known and appreciated by Chinese immigration—was unclear to us and to traders themselves.

One way to beat the system is to obtain a new visa under the table, but this is widely seen as difficult to do today, as opposed to years past. A second way is to use multiple passports. Someone from a given African country comes to China with a one-year visa. Two months before the visa expiration date, he gets an agent back home to help him apply for a new passport and visa, saying that the passport has been stolen. The agent in Africa will ask someone going from the home country to Macau to carry the new passport and visa and the person uses his old passport to leave China for Macau to pick up his new passport. Then the person uses the new passport to enter China, with a new twelve-month permission to

stay in China. Apparently this dodge worked for a number of years, if not now. Another dodge was to use the same passport for two different people, since the Chinese reportedly can't tell one African from another. But "now they can," we were told by a Ugandan. "My friend was caught. I sent him my passport number and name. But these days, they ask you so many questions. You tell them the date of birth . . . but now they ask you to sign, and you can't sign—because they ask the other guy to sign too, and his signature looks different. They can tell that you are lying." As China tightens its rules, gaming the system has become more difficult.

If someone was caught overstaying, there was a fine of 5,000 RMB up until 2012, then a 10,000 RMB fine, and, as of late 2014, a 12,000 RMB fine, some traders tell us, with a five-year ban on returning to China. One overstayer maintained, "Some people say that the police will release you after months, and others say that they will just keep you in jail if you don't have any money. But I've heard that they take you to the airport and pay your ticket after you have been in jail for a month. Or they ask your family to pay." No one knows for sure. An overstayer may not be imprisoned if he is lucky and can immediately pay, or he may perhaps be imprisoned indefinitely until the fine is paid. Jail in China, by all accounts, is a bad place, with African prisoners subject to beatings and, because of the poor prison diet, to sickness and malnutrition. Food is so meager in prison that outside contributions of money are necessary in order to survive for long.[7] But as with so many other areas of African life in Guangzhou, the rumor mill was rife with speculation. One well-informed trader said:

> If you're arrested here in Guangzhou, you might be in jail one month. If you're caught in Guangzhou, you have to buy your own ticket home, but if you're caught in Nanhai [a district in the neighboring city of Foshan] they'll buy you an air ticket, and you might be in prison only two weeks, or maybe not go to prison at all. If they catch you, they'll buy you a ticket and deport you. Some Africans who are tired of their situation, they want to get caught. But if you go to the police and report yourself, they may tell you, "Sorry." They won't take you!

Indeed, it is generally believed by overstayers that areas such as Nanhai treat overstayers more lightly than do authorities in Guangzhou, who are thought to be particularly severe;[8] many overstayers we know live outside Guangzhou proper exactly for this reason.

There are various strategies overstayers use to alleviate their situation. One strategy (described by Edwin later in this chapter) is to carefully make invest-

ments and save your money, and then turn yourself in to pay off your fine in a district that will accept your surrender, thereby enabling you to go home in such a way as to avoid jail in China with enough money to be able to hold your head high in Nigeria. This is every overstaying trader's dream, but it seems remarkably difficult to do; most overstayers would return home if only they had the money to do so. There are a few overstayers who have done remarkably well: several, in partnership with their Chinese wives or girlfriends,* own the factories that make the textiles they send back to Nigeria; several others have negotiated such extensive deals as middlemen that the 5 percent commission they typically receive has brought them considerable wealth. Much more often, their deals are smaller, making them, with luck, just enough money to finance their journeys home—but even this is no more than a dream for the vast majority of overstayers in Guangyuanxi.

Another strategy, one that began to be utilized only in 2013–2014, was to become an asylum seeker. In 2012, the Beijing office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees began accepting Somali asylum seekers,[9] and by 2013, some Nigerian asylum seekers as well, including a friend of ours after he had traveled to Beijing and gone through interviews at the commissioner's office. The advantage of being an asylum seeker is that you are safe from being arrested on the street—asylum seekers have officially issued papers attesting to their status. Our friend said:

> Last week I was walking in Guangyuanxi. I had confidence. I just walked straight, without preparing to run. I saw some plainclothes police checking documents ten meters in front of me, and some were at my back, pretending to be walking. Before, in this situation, I would have been frightened and would have run away. But that day, I was so excited because I have the UN papers! I was thinking in my mind, "Come to me!" and then I would show them my papers. Some of the police looked at me. But no one stopped me.

However, asylum seekers are not allowed to work, and if they are caught working, this results in confiscation of their papers and arrest by police on the spot. A few months after our friend told us the above, he was caught working and was deported.

Neither of these strategies are followed by most overstayers—they don't have the money to follow the first strategy and are reluctant to follow the second be-

*Overstayers cannot legally marry Chinese. However, they can marry Chinese in religious ceremonies, even if these are not recognized by the Chinese government.

cause they still might be caught and deported if they work, as they must. So they simply pray that one of their investments will hit the jackpot. Because of the increasing danger of getting caught, many overstayers stay home, hiring Chinese to run their stores and trying to run their business activities by phone, immobility making it all the more likely that their jackpot will never arrive.

Police

Every African we know in Guangzhou worries about police, but the scale of worry drastically varies. An East African logistics agent and legal resident of Guangzhou says, "In Xiaobei, even if you have the correct visa, the police may stop you and delay you for hours, and ask for payment. But I have a correct visa. Why should I pay them?" A West African trader and informal lodging-house operator told of how police come at midnight some nights to check for visas. "They disturb me and they disturb my clients who are staying with me, even though we are all legal. The police ask for 50 RMB when they come in and check for visas; if you don't pay, they won't give you back your passport. There's no receipt—it's a bribe." A Chinese senior policeman we came to know in Guangzhou swore that almost all police did not take bribes—"less than 5 percent of them," he insisted—but many African traders we spoke with insisted that bribery continually took place when no onlookers with authority were around, when, for example, police could raid an apartment complex late at night and extract money from Africans. These bribes are typically not large for those who have committed no offense—50 RMB is roughly US$7.50—but certainly have done nothing to increase senses of trust between foreign traders and Chinese authorities.[10]

These bribes were viewed by traders as mosquito bites, irritating but hardly catastrophic. But on at least some occasions minor interactions with police lead to catastrophe. An East African university student related to us how his West African friend was asked for his passport by undercover police who did not identify themselves, and he said to them, "No, I'm not going to give it to you!" Then he pushed one of the policemen. The police subdued him and took him away; he lost his university scholarship, was expelled from the university, and became impossible to contact. Presumably he was jailed for a few weeks and then sent back to his home country. This case, however, was unusual; more often, the African and Arab long-term entrepreneurs I know could even fail to show their passports to police ("Sorry, I left it at home") with no consequences other than a warning.

For overstayers, on the other hand, a police raid could abruptly end their

lives in China. Kingsley, in chapter 2, described how he felt like a gazelle at the water hole on a Discovery Channel show. He avoids the "crocodiles" by conducting most of his business from his home via telephone and going to his office in Guangyuanxi only in the evening. Police raids, he ascertained, usually take place during working hours, and the police pack up and go home at 5 p.m., after which he could show up and do his business more or less safely, he felt. He told us, "The police check most often on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and they don't check from 12:00 to 2:00 and 6:00 to 7:00." As of spring 2016, he has remained out of police clutches.

There has long been a fear of police among Nigerian entrepreneurs and merchants, but that fear was not enough to keep them from their workplace. Many of the more established overstayer entrepreneurs had shops in one of the malls in Guangyuanxi, where they did business and spent much of their daily lives. They were always alert to the possibility of police raids, ready to flee out the nearest exit at a moment's notice; but they generally didn't have to, because raids were infrequent. But this changed after a police raid at the Golden Dragon Li Hua Hotel on August 13, 2013.

Police descended upon the hotel, several hundred yards from Guangyuanxi's Nigerian malls, in pursuit of Nigerian heroin dealers; several were arrested, and some—perhaps 8, Nigerian word on the street held, or 3, or 20, or none, as discussed in chapter 2—jumped out the window, fearing China's death penalty for drug dealers, and were killed in the fall. Guangzhou newspaper reports in subsequent days stressed that 1,300 police participated in the action, and 168 "criminals" were caught, most from West Africa, with a few Chinese.[11] The news did not mention any casualties, but several of our Nigerian friends showed us on their mobile phones pictures of dead victims lying on the ground shrouded in sheets, photos that they insisted depicted what really happened. In the days following the raid, we spoke with many of the Africans and Chinese we knew and heard a range of reactions. The Nigerian traders were predictably outraged, saying "Why pick on Nigerians? We help China in our business!" But some African traders we spoke with felt that these raids were a good thing, in that dealing hard drugs such as heroin is a crime that cannot be tolerated, and that brings shame to Nigerians and Africans in Guangzhou. An East African trader said:

> I think it's good if the Chinese government handles [drug dealers] seriously. The way they're handling overstayers is also good, in that these people are not well-behaved, especially Nigerians. Being in the country illegally, if you are an overstayer, is not bad. But the way they behave is not good!

This statement reflects the widespread fear that many Africans have toward Nigerian Igbos, who are widely seen as both smart businesspeople and as particularly prone to aggression. (Indeed, one rumor after the raid was that the Chinese police were cracking down on Nigerians not because of drug dealing but because a group of Nigerians had beaten up some Chinese policemen.) But it also reflects the widespread view that while drug dealing and other bad behavior should not be tolerated, it is wrong to think that overstayers are engaged in such crimes when most are simply trying to make a living.

Several people we spoke with worried that these raids would open the floodgates for the rounding up of all overstayers. As a sympathetic Chinese shopkeeper in Guangyuanxi told us, "Some overstayers in China try risky and illegal business to earn more money, such as dealing drugs; but most don't. But now, the Chinese police are acting as if all overstayers are drug dealers." Linessa had the opportunity to meet with a Chinese immigration official in early 2014, who intimated that police and immigration sought above all to catch drug dealers, and if police efforts hurt the African population at large, particularly overstayers, that was simply too bad. Their poverty has led many Nigerians to violate the law in various small ways. Yang witnessed an act of everyday trickery in summer 2010.[12] The Guangzhou public buses at that time used an electronic reader to deduct the fare from a city transportation card. None of the Nigerians used the card: "You don't need a stupid card. Just imitate the beep sound with a whistle. The driver won't notice," one Nigerian told her, demonstrating how to pretend to be holding a card while emitting a whistle that sounded exactly like the reader machine, letting him in for free. This is a mild form of lawbreaking but can easily enough fit into the Chinese narrative that those who overstay might readily violate the law in other ways as well.

On the other hand, being illegal also sometimes led to the abuse of overstayers by Chinese, as one young Nigerian man told Yang:

> My previous landlord was just evil. I paid my rent on time every month but she wanted more money. She knew I had visa problems, so she threatened to report me to the police. I was afraid and so I gave her more money each month. She also demanded that I pay 5 to 10 RMB to her each time I went back to my apartment. If I didn't pay, she would cut the electricity supply. . . . Somehow she thought I deserved all this maltreatment. I am a human being too![13]

Linessa and I witnessed a number of police raids in the months after the Golden Dragon raid, such as this one in December 2013:

> Today at around 3:00, shops in the underground floor of the mall suddenly began to close. Nigerian shopkeepers stopped doing what they were doing, rolled down the metal shutters of their shops, and gathered in the center of the aisle to wait for instructions as to which exit to go to so that they could escape police. Security guards, two Chinese men, quickly appeared and guided the Nigerians as to where to leave the mall, after checking on where exactly the police were coming from. They showed the Africans where to run to in the residential areas nearby, where police would find it difficult to track them down.

The malls in Guangyuanxi have multiple exits, meaning that in a police raid escape is not difficult, unless African traders or merchants are in the wrong place at the wrong time or unless they run rather than walk once they are spotted, giving themselves away as overstayers. Because the Chinese building management makes its money from its African tenants, the building's guards help them escape.

Some Africans assume that in the various conflicts pitting some Chinese and some Africans against one another, the conflict is invariably ethnic. "The Chinese are working together to get rid of Africans in China," we were sometimes told—but it typically is more complicated. Chinese such as these building guards help Africans as long as they can do it without jeopardizing their own jobs. One Chinese merchant, a woman who sublet several shops to Africans (who cannot rent for themselves unless they have work permits) told us, "I don't want my tenant to get caught. She still owes me a month's rent. If she gets caught, I'll get nothing!" This woman continually grumbled about the African entrepreneurs around her, but knew full well that her immediate economic well-being depended upon their presence.

Once an overstayer is arrested, there may still be a way out. In 2010, Yang was told how to do this:

> If it's one policeman . . . I can pay him a few thousand RMB and he'll let me go. When doing this, you need to be very discreet. I knew a person who was already . . . [in] the police station, about to be sent back to Africa. The policeman gave this guy his phone back and asked him if he had 10,000 RMB and a passport. The guy was clever and immediately called his friend to send him the money and a fake passport. The policeman took the passport and money and just let this guy go. But of course, if there are many policemen there, it's impossible to make these arrangements.[14]

In 2014, Linessa and I heard similar stories. In another overstayer's words:

> It costs 17,000 RMB when you get picked up by the police—the fine itself is 12,000 RMB and the flight back to Africa is around 5,000 RMB. Everybody must pay the fine once you're at immigration. But before you arrive at immigration, if the police ask you for money, you can pay 3,000 to 5,000 RMB, depending on how much they ask you for, and the police will let you go. But if you're going to pay, you can't ask about it yourself, because that's seen as asking to bribe, and you'll be in much worse trouble. Instead, they have to ask you for a bribe. You have to be careful.

The overstayers we know were generally not able to resort to such bribes. Police raids began taking place every day beginning mid-August 2013, with reports of thirty or forty or eighty overstayers arrested daily. Initially Guangyuanxi's African shopkeepers began appearing only in the evening, when police typically would have gone home, but after several months of police raids they stopped appearing at all unless all their papers were in order, hiring or persuading Chinese, in some cases their girlfriends or wives, to appear in their shops instead. The police sought to catch overstayers but expanded their net to include anyone without a proper visa and work permit; some Nigerians were not overstayers but also were not authorized to work, and so they too might be arrested. Beyond this, if a visa or work permit was not issued in Guangzhou but in some other city, it was deemed invalid and its holder could be arrested.

The effect of this was to create widespread fear among African entrepreneurs, not just in Guangyuanxi but everywhere. As one Nigerian entrepreneur told us, "These days, Africans fear to go out, especially those without visas. The Chinese police even stop buses, taxis, and private cars. They set up roadblocks everywhere. I see buses at night being stopped, and they're asking for passports and visas. Africans are now so scared." Another said, "These African stores here are all going out of business. . . . China just doesn't like Africans."

Many of the overstayers we knew were through the church we attended; we asked one of the parishioners, a very devout Christian, "Is there anything that you can do to fight this?" He said, "No, China is not a Christian country. There's absolutely nothing we can do." On the other hand, a firebrand Nigerian merchant fumed, "If the Chinese police keep doing this, we're going to burn down buildings. This whole area will go up in flames!" The police raids continued day after day in November, December, and January of 2013–2014, and began to have a cumulative effect, lessening the number of merchants willing to stay open, and lessening the number of customers. By the spring of 2014, the trading malls of Guangyuanxi were a ghost town, with a few stalls run by Chinese women or by

the rare African man with legal residence remaining open, but with most closed, hidden behind gray metal shutters. In the early and late fall of 2015, I visited Guangyuanxi and found that while there were still a good number of Nigerian and other African customers, very few shops were being run by Nigerians—behind the counters of almost all stalls were Chinese. I was told that of the overstayers in Guangzhou in August 2013, 60 percent had been caught by December 2015; those who remained free stayed away from Guangyuanxi, conducting their business by telephone and avoiding leaving their apartments and going out into the streets.

Accounts of Overstayers and Friends

Edwin

Edwin is a man in his mid-thirties who has meticulously managed to save up enough money for his return to Nigeria and negotiate his return so that he won't go to jail in China, but can simply board a plane to go home. Yang and I spoke to him several times in 2012 and early 2013. Linessa and I spoke to him for a final time in December 2013, the day before he left Guangzhou.

> I came to China for the first time in 2002. I just stayed for one month to buy goods and went back to Nigeria. In 2006, I decided to stay here and do business, because it was too much trouble to get a Chinese visa from Nigeria. I was an apprentice following a master before I came here. When you've served your master for four or five years in Nigeria, they'll settle with you and give you money to start your own business. I learned my business from my master in Nigeria, but when I came here I learned more. I think I make more money than my master in Nigeria.
>
> I'm an overstayer. More than half the traders in Guangyuanxi don't have documents. It's easy to live in China as an overstayer. If you travel by air, you need a passport and visa, but the business I'm doing—going to wholesale outlets and factories and ordering goods for customers in Nigeria—is interprovince in China: I can go to Yiwu and other places by bus, because nobody checks your passport. Any goods I send home, I send directly to my brother, who's managing the business in Nigeria. Others send to their friends, but they may not ever see their money again. Once I lost US$6,000 to someone I thought I could trust. So now I send my money and goods only to my brother. . . . My clients send the sample and I order. See this order on my

mobile phone: six thousand pieces, 9.5 RMB per piece, but I charge him 11 RMB. Yes, I make money, but I can't save it because I can't have a bank account; I carry 40,000 RMB in my pocket. All the profit I make, I buy new goods. But I'm happy because I came to China with nothing and now I'm going back with something. I'm buying a used Mack truck for US$38,000 and sending it to Nigeria. I'll lease it; companies there need it. This will put money in my account.

I've been here nine years and no policeman has stopped me. I pray morning and evening; maybe that's why. I had four visas in my passport in 2003–2005, when I was legal. After that, I didn't renew, because at immigration they refused to give me a visa. Some countries are on the Chinese blacklist: Nigeria is one of them. . . . I speak Chinese. Before, I had a Chinese girlfriend, but she refused to teach me Chinese. When we broke up, I forced myself to learn. I'm not so perfect, but at least I can communicate 40 percent.

I miss my people, my sisters, brothers, friends back in Nigeria. This morning I called my elder brother. He asked me, "When are you coming back?" For three years they are calling me, "Come back! Come back!" No, I don't like Chinese girls. They like money too much. Many of them haven't traveled outside China. I like China, but only for business. If I knew everything I knew now, would I have come to China? No. If I hadn't come to China, I'd be married now and have children in Nigeria. I'm not regretting it. But if, back in Nigeria, a young person asks me if he should go to China, I would say, "If you have a little money, start a business in Nigeria, don't come to China. They refused to give me a visa. So why should we come here? You'd better start your life back there. Don't be an overstayer." Yes, I'm going to miss China: I'll miss my friends, my business partners. But I've worked hard for my future children so that they won't have to go to China, unless the visa policy changes. We are like under slavery this way—we have no rights.

Edwin, unlike most overstayers, carefully arranged his departure, obtaining an Emergency Certificate for Departure from the Nigerian Embassy in Beijing, replacing his passport for US$100, and going to the police station in Nanhai to pay all his fines. He said that the police behaved very politely toward him but were shocked to find that he had been in China for nine years as an overstayer. We never saw a happier man than Edwin once his departure was confirmed. Later, we called him in Nigeria. He told us that he would soon marry a young Nigerian woman; they appear in their WeChat photos to be very happy together. But later, Yang, who was closest to him among us, found that Edwin had in fact

been cheated out of much of his money in Nigeria. He felt that he couldn't hold his head up high in meeting his family, and so he remained in Lagos, avoiding going back to his home village; he apparently cannot yet get married. His current lack of money and pride have prevented him from moving on in his life, an apt illustration of the plight of many of the Nigerian overstayers we know, even though he, unlike them, was able to return to Nigeria.

Ben

Ben is another overstayer in his thirties, substantially more irreverent than Edwin. He and I met and drank gin together, with our conversations becoming more and more interesting until he would ask Linessa to turn off the recorder.

> Eighty-five percent of Nigerians in Guangyuanxi are illegal—overstayers. I know people who have jumped off buildings because of the pressure of being illegal. What's the closest run-in I've had from police? One day I got a call from a friend to have a bottle of beer with him. I was just standing there talking on the phone, and a van stopped in front of me, and six guys jumped out, wearing mufti, not even a police uniform; I knew they were cops. I was lucky, because they were trying to open the sliding door of the van, and it was hard for them. Before they could jump out from their van, I ran. They shouted for me to stop—they obeyed the traffic laws, but I didn't, and ran across the express road. No, I didn't have a beer with my friend that day! When I came back home, I said, "God, you really did it again today!"
>
> In this mall, they nabbed two people the day before yesterday. Everybody is at a loss—anything can happen at any time. Right now, if I got a call saying they were coming, I'd just leave the shop open and go, just go out the door. Of course I know the exits—the first thing you do when you go into a business place is how to get in and out! There's no way the police can be at all the exits. There are exits in back; there are links to other plazas; and as an African I can run faster than the Chinese police. I can jump the fence! If I could talk to the Chinese government, I would say, give us some leniency, let our passports be recognized. If someone applies for an extension, let it be granted. Nigerians are making the economy grow! The Chinese government knows that millions of dollars from Nigeria come here on a daily basis. So why are we being deprived of our rights? Chinese in Nigeria can do anything they want—you can go for an extension and it will be given to you, open a factory, open a business center. But we can't do that in Guangzhou!

Yes, I have a Chinese girlfriend. But there's no possibility of getting permanent residence or citizenship if I marry her. Hopefully someday, the Chinese government will soften. Then I wouldn't have to live my life like a rodent. . . . If I could get a passport under the table, could I manage to leave China? No, Chinese immigration know me—my name is there! I didn't fall from the sky! If I gave myself up in Foshan, I'd have to pay the 12,000 RMB fine and pay for my ticket. Some people have stayed here ten years, and they can't pay that. It's not easy! Most people you see around here, it's not that they don't want to go back. Some just don't have the money to pay the fine or buy the ticket. They're living hand-to-mouth. Nobody wants to be undocumented; you never know what can happen.

For what happened at Dragon Inn, nobody knows now many died: we don't know how many people jumped from the sixth floor. Since then, there have been checks everywhere. Sometimes the Chinese manager will tell us that they don't want to lose us—they make money from us. Yes, the Nigerians beat up a Chinese policeman. The molestation was too much. Even if you want to check on people, it shouldn't be a daily routine. I'm not safe, but I know that He that watches over me is great, so. . . . And I avoid the hot places, the places that can be easily checked: the train station, the subways, the buses. I take taxis; they're safer. Police stop buses and check sometimes. These buses are air-conditioned, and the windows are sealed; you can't get out. Taxis are more expensive. But what can you do?

Am I making money? Not much. You can say that I'm paying my rent. To go back to Nigeria, how much money would I need? Well, there's no way to satisfy a man's wants. But you do need to put things together before you can think of going back home. You wouldn't like to go back with only as much money as you had before you come here. Since you've gone to another person's country, you want to have something to show for it. Yes, if you were to give me US$100,000, it would be OK for me to go back! $50,000? I may, if there's a person to fix my papers. $50,000 would be OK. Yes, I have a plan, but sometimes you don't have the money to carry it out—there's nothing you can do about it. Hopefully, I'll leave some day.

Yes, you want to go back. In Nigerian culture, there's always the need to see people you've left for a long time, who took care of you when you were nothing. Nobody says, "I've fallen in love with China, I don't want to go back home." I wouldn't want my younger brother to come to China—life is too tough. I'd want him to be educated in school and work for the civil service in

> Nigeria; when you get old, you can retire with a pension. If Nigeria had a decent government, I wouldn't have come to China. I hate the Nigerian government because they're so corrupt. But if you're in Nigeria, being involved in the government is the only way you can ever make money. It's better for my business that the government isn't good—we can pay people off at customs—but in the long run, that's not sustainable; it's wrong for future generations. Nigeria has all the resources it needs to develop. But there's no steady electricity, nothing works, because everything goes into officials' pockets.

I visited Ben in December 2015, and he was still in Guangzhou, still coming to his office in Guangyuanxi when it seemed safe, and still dreaming of putting away enough money to make his grand return home.

Isaac

Isaac we met through the Nigerian church we attended. He too is in his thirties, and he too came to China to look for his fortune. But even more than for Edwin or for Ben, for Isaac, God is the being around whom his life revolves. We interviewed him several times in 2013–2014, when the police raids were at their height:

> My shop has been closed for four months now. For four months I haven't paid my rent. The management called me and told me that I shouldn't come there and get hurt, since so many police are around. They said they'd open my shop and pack my stuff, and keep it in their warehouse. I'll go there, pay them, and get my stuff when I can. I'll have to pay all the back rent. They might take some of my goods and then deny it. I was paying 3,000 RMB rent per month. My stock is worth 40,000 RMB.

Two months later, we spoke again:

> I paid management the rent I owed them, but when I went to pick up my goods, many of my goods weren't there. When I asked them, they said, "This is what we saw." Yes, I think the management cheated me, because I wasn't there. I auctioned off the goods, and I received 18,000 RMB from the auction. I had to pay them 8,000 RMB as penalty for what I owed them, so I got only 10,000 RMB. There's always a problem for people who have shops but don't have

papers. Customers ask me why my shop closed. I tell them about the police and the papers. Yes, now I can't meet new people—it's old customers I deal with, unless it's by the grace of God.

This building my shop is in has had problems with the government. An African man died here—an overstayer jumped from a top floor. He was scared of the police pursuing him without their uniforms. When we heard that, we began to protest—the protest was on CNN, and the world knew about it. That took place maybe two years ago. I think that Chinese are doing this now for revenge. After the Golden Dragon Hotel raid, the police came here the first time, the second time, the third time, and they didn't see any drug dealers. So why not leave us alone? But the police kept coming back, pursuing people that didn't do anything wrong.

An African man will take all the money he has to come to China to pull his family out of poverty. God is using him. When someone travels to a new place to pull his family out of poverty and you deny him a visa, he's not going to go back, because he knows that going back is suicide. Just because someone's an overstayer doesn't mean that he's a criminal, a corrupter, a drug pusher. But China gives and China takes away. If today, my visa were finished, the most honorable thing to do is to go home. But sometimes, your visa may be expiring but you don't have the money to fly back to your home country to extend your visa. So what do you do? . . . Security killed a Nigerian man, knocked him down, he hit his head on the floor and died—yes, I knew him—but they will say that the boy died by himself; they will not tell the truth. There's nothing you can do about this. Nigerians can't defend themselves. We're stuck; it's not our country. Everybody here is looking for a way to escape. But how can you go when you don't have the money?

How much money would I need to escape, to be able to pay off the fines, buy the ticket, and go back home as a success? Yes, if you gave me US$15,000, I'm leaving now. I'll go to Foshan, next to Guangzhou, tomorrow morning and pay the fine, and they'll give me a paper saying that I have five days to leave. Some fools, if they get that money, they'll buy goods and send them back home, where some people might eat the money. When you get money, save it! But now, many overstayers can't do business—they stay at home and are hungry, with no business at all; they're dying in their homes. No, we won't burn down Guangyuanxi! We are Christian: we don't do that. We'll just find another door to escape from. . . .

My friend is in Switzerland. I left Nigeria at the same time he left. He's married now—he has a family—he's a permanent resident of Switzerland. Yes,

of course I feel envious, but I'm happy for him! I applied to go to Europe, but they duped me—my money was eaten. I don't have a home, a marriage. If I'd gone to Switzerland nine years ago, now I would be a person of some value. No, I cannot blame God; God brought me here for a purpose. I sent money home, but my brother thinks I'm in a place like Switzerland, and so he ate all the money: "You're overseas, better than us. Any money that comes back here becomes our own." My father is asking me to send $2,000 more; the earlier $1,000 is missing. "What about the money I earlier sent you?" I asked him. "I went to the hospital, and then I bought this and this. . . ." "But this money is for business, for you to raise money and help your child!" He finished the money; he doesn't want to die. I will go back to Nigeria in February by the grace of God. Before February, I expect to be able to save $12,000 to go back. When I go back, I won't need to beg my father to give me food! I'm too old for that! Yes, maybe God sent me to China so that I'd become a better Christian. God has taken me for a long journey, in order to teach me many things. I will not really know why I went on this long journey until I go back home. One day I will realize this.

They caught one of our people from church two weeks ago. We contributed money to get him out: we collected 8,000 RMB for his fine. The police attack us anywhere now. When they attacked him, they attacked us all in the church. The police mobbed him, saw he didn't have a passport, then forced him inside a car, and took him away. The next phone call, "Hey, my brother, I'm inside now." Yes, the police beat you! If you don't respect them, ten people will begin to beat you mercilessly. Many Nigerians have died in jail. All they give you to eat is white rice, potatoes, and water—you get sick very fast. But being in jail is not a problem because it can make a person become strong. For me, going to jail is not in God's plan—I will not be there—God will take care of me.

We tried to reach Isaac in fall 2015, but couldn't—his phone was dead. His friend said that he indeed had saved up enough money to return to Nigeria, but we cannot verify this.

Ralph

Ralph is a merchant from Taiwan in his sixties who has a shop in Guangyuanxi. "I was born in Taiwan, graduated from the university, and then went to the U.S. in my twenties, married an Italian woman and had a child and lived in New

York." The marriage broke up; he lost his job, and went back to Taiwan for the family business. He had a second wife and child in Taiwan, and they eventually moved to Guangzhou some twenty years ago. In Guangzhou he invested in goods bound for Africa for a number of years, but lost much of his money. His wife developed cancer, and he went to a doctor of Chinese medicine:

> The doctor said to me, "If this medicine cures your wife, you need to pay me 200,000 RMB. If it doesn't, I'll give you a million RMB." We signed a contract—my wife lived, and I paid 200,000 RMB. This Chinese doctor didn't want to give away his secrets to the public, because this was the emperor's medicine. But eventually he agreed to help me, and I began studying Chinese medicine under him: he taught me all I know.

Today, although his business is nominally auto parts, most of his business is Chinese medicine: providing it to Nigerians who can't afford to go to a hospital. He also serves as a de facto spokesman for Nigerians to Chinese:

> I met a Chinese official and asked him, "Do you think it's fair to catch black men on the street? Customers are afraid to come to this area!" Sometimes there are good reasons not to have papers, reasons you can't avoid. The Taiwanese when they come here, they are coming to invest. But the Africans are coming to survive. Villagers come together in Nigeria and send one of their members to China to buy goods. If he's lost all the money because he gets cheated, he can't go back, so he stays without papers. I told this Chinese official that police can't always come here—if they push the Nigerians into a corner, then they will have to start robbing people and selling drugs.
>
> Nigerian people: you can't believe them about anything, especially money. I'm working in the middle of a Nigerian mall, and I try to do it with integrity. You need to show them how to keep promises. China used to be like Nigeria: you couldn't trust what people said. But China is changing because it's getting rich; from about ten years ago, China became trustworthy. Of course, even now there are some who are not so good, but . . . .

Ralph's stall has "witness statements," phone numbers included, attesting how his medicines "cure high blood pressure, diabetes, abnormal menstruation, belly pains, low sperm count, impotence." Many of these medicines he doesn't charge for, or doesn't charge much for, since he knows that many Nigerians are in difficult financial straits. Ralph's Chinese medicine cures for Nigerians may

or may not work. I am a diabetic with a blood-sugar measuring device. I tested one Nigerian man's blood after he exclaimed that Ralph had cured his diabetes, and found a blood-sugar level that was dangerously high; but this man had no money. What do you do if you don't have any money and in a place like China, a place like Guangyuanxi, you develop symptoms? You go to Ralph. His medicines may not always work, but he is nonetheless a Good Samaritan, helping the Nigerians around him in mind if not necessarily in body.

* * *

These four men's stories tell us a great deal about the lives of overstayers in Guangzhou: the sheer uncertainty—even terror—of that life, living "like a rodent," as Ben puts it, while trying desperately to earn enough money to return home with pride and dignity intact. The three Igbo men above have quite different situations. Edwin managed to save up money and arranged for his departure. He was one of the rare Nigerian overstayers we met who was able to depart China on his own terms, following his own plans and path (even if he apparently wasn't as successful back in Nigeria as he had hoped). Neither Ben nor Isaac had yet been able to do this at the time we spoke with them, largely because to leave requires capital that neither has. Ben speaks of US$50,000 as a minimum to enable him to leave Guangzhou and return to Nigeria; Isaac would depart for US$15,000. But these are hypothetical, since neither has the money at present—they can't leave until they have enough cash to make their departure possible, something particularly difficult because, since they are traders, they feel compelled to invest their money in their shipments of goods back home or in savings—which in China must remain within their pockets, as Edwin tells us, and in Nigeria may be eaten up by one's family, as is apparent from Isaac's account.

Ben has his Chinese girlfriend who cannot help him get a visa but who can provide a degree of interpersonal sustenance, even if he is too shy to say so. Isaac has his God, who he believes looks after him and protects him, a God that is central to his life. Edwin, although also a religious believer, has practical business foresight enabling him to actually pack up and leave. All these overstayers regret that they had to place themselves in such a precarious position in a foreign country that they feel abuses them. But this seemed their only escape from Nigeria, a country that in their view doesn't work but that still calls them back as home.

And finally, there is Ralph, one of the very few outsiders helping these overstayers. He has only the most minimal of businesses, not least because he gives his Chinese medicine to customers at a discount or for free if they have no money.

How much his medicine actually helps the afflicted people who come to his stall is unclear; but certainly his presence is a psychological aid for those who lack the money, not to mention the legal status, to go to hospitals. He has learned over the years not to trust his Nigerian customers, but also understands that this is a matter of money and its lack: "China used to be like Nigeria," he tells us. To Nigerians he looks Chinese; but as a Taiwanese, he is seen as an outsider by many Chinese, and perhaps he aids Nigerians partly because they are fellow outsiders.

SIX

Logistics Agents, Middlemen, and Cultural Brokers

Logistics Agents

The large majority of Africans in Guangzhou are traders. If they are legal, as most are, they typically come and go, staying in Guangzhou only for a matter of weeks before returning home to sell the goods they have sent back. Many make two or four or six trips a year to buy goods in China, but their home base is in Africa, where they may own or manage retail stores or businesses. But there are some Africans with long-term visas, obtained through an opaque mixture of good fortune, connections, and marriage to a Chinese, who can legally stay in China on an extended basis; some use their social and cultural capital to occupy niches as logistics agents. There are also African overstayers who fit into this niche, often those who are particularly well trusted by their fellows.[1] Almost all traders—unless what they buy is so light that they can carry it themselves, or unless they have such massive orders from a single company that they can fill up whole containers with that company's goods—use a logistics agent, also known as a cargo handler or freight forwarder. These logistics agents typically also work as middlemen and have another role too: they are cultural brokers, emissaries between

Figure 13. Advertising sign in logistics office (photo by Yang Yang)

the African traders who come to Guangzhou and the Chinese world that hosts them.

The job of logistics agents is to send their customers' goods by air or sea from China—typically from Chinese ports for many but not all sea-bound container goods and from Hong Kong for many but not all goods sent as air freight—to African airports or seaports, such as Mombasa, Eldoret, Lagos, or Matadi. These agents generally do not deal with logistics in Africa, but only with getting goods to Africa. For sea freight, it may take twenty-five to thirty days to get to an East African port like Mombasa, or forty or more days to a West African port, such as Lomé. Air freight may take as little as two to three days, but often as long as a week or more. In one agent's words, "We dispatch goods every Friday at 8:00 p.m. There's a flight from China, a flight from Turkey, a flight from Bangkok, a flight from India—they all meet in Dubai. Then they're taken by one cargo plane, leased by our company, to our base in Eldoret. It takes six days in all for your goods to arrive."

Typically, African logistics agents deal primarily with customers of their own ethnicity. Logistics agents dealing with containers have warehouses for sea-going goods. They give cards to their customers with English- and Chinese-language instructions saying, "Send the goods to this warehouse," which the customers give to merchants after placing an order of goods. At the warehouse, the goods

Figure 14. Map in logistics office (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

are divided by the port to which they are shipped, and are sent once the amount is sufficient to fill a container. Typically, at least for Kenyan cargo, payment is made not in China but in Kenya. "If you are a known customer, after one or two days, my boys will come and collect the money from you." This is largely because many foreign-operated logistics offices are not legally allowed to accept money in China.

There are perhaps two hundred African logistics agents in Guangzhou. Almost as a rule they work with Chinese logistics companies, since the latter book a large volume of containers worldwide and thus can get cheaper rates than can African logistics agents working on their own. Also, Chinese logistics companies can provide expertise in getting goods past Chinese customs, legally or illegally. The African logistics agents' job may involve the inspection of goods to ensure their quality for the customer, and also, crucially, the ongoing care of customers. Most of these logistics agents work as either partners or employees for global logistics companies with offices in cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Dubai. While a significant minority of traders in Guangzhou are female, African logistics agents are overwhelmingly male.

The logistics agents we know—typically people working in different small storefronts or offices in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi—send between five and forty containers a month if they ship by sea, or several tons a month if they deal in air freight. Profit margin for sea traffic is between US$100 and US$800 per container, depending upon whether a full container is shipped by a customer, or one

that involves multiple customers, and extensive packing from the logistics agent. As one explained:

> The more cubic meters we have, the more money we make. If you pack heavy construction equipment, you lose a lot of space because it's so bulky, but clothing, it's easy to fill the container and get lots of cubic meters. We charge roughly US$367 per cubic meter. Normally, there are sixty-eight cubic meters per forty-foot container. For this container, we will charge roughly US$25,000. In this particular container, there are twenty different customers. That's where you make money—if it's one person, one container, you cannot make money.

A container of clothing may contain goods worth roughly US$200,000 to $300,000. Thus, even a small-scale logistics agent may be transporting several million dollars' worth of goods each month—in actual value, if not necessarily in the declared amount for customs. Air freight differs from sea freight in that the key measurement is not volume but weight. One air freight logistics agent tells us that he charges US$8.50 per kilogram of airfreight, and was speaking of receiving that day an order for close to four tons, 3,500 kilos of computer accessories. He said that he needs to be able to ship two tons a week, or eight tons a month, to break even.

The more high-end logistics agents I know have CCTV cameras focused on their warehouses so they can continually monitor what's happening. Other agents simply visit the warehouses whenever a container is to be loaded, at least until they have a relationship of trust with their Chinese warehouse personnel. They do this for two reasons. First, there is how containers are loaded: African logistics agents make their living from filling forty-foot containers with as economical a usage of space as possible and have various careful strategies for how exactly to load the container, but their Chinese employees on their forklifts may instead focus on loading the container as rapidly as possible. Second, there is the matter of how to pack copies. Most containers are never inspected—in a forty-foot container, inspection may seem more trouble than it's worth to many customs inspectors; globally, less than 5 percent of the goods passing through the world's ports are ever inspected.[2] But still, caution must be exercised in sending copies, since if they're found and confiscated, the entire container may be delayed for several weeks. A Kenyan logistics agent told us, "If I have to hide copy iPads in the container, I place them in a refrigerator deep inside the container. Then I put a wooden frame on the refrigerator for protection." Aside from hiding copies, there is the necessity of avoiding customs duties; as a Nigerian logistics

Figure 15. Loading a container (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

agent said, "When I'm loading I start with clothes [packed in the deepest, most inaccessible part of the container], because they attract more taxes. Construction materials don't attract much tax, and also computer parts: put them on top. To beat customs, we put the things that attract minimal customs duties last, so that if anyone has to open the container, that's the first thing they'll see."[3]

Another problem that logistics agents face is that of names. Secrecy is of considerable importance, in that suppliers don't want logistics agents to know the names of their clients for fear that the logistics agents will steal them and use them for their own business interests; clients don't want other clients to know the names of their suppliers for fear that other clients will compete with them in the goods they order. Logistics agents who work as middlemen, as most do, also don't want suppliers and customers to become too close because then they could cut out the need for any middlemen. The need for secrecy is thus built in; but if the goods that logistics agents seek to send do not have the names and contact numbers of clients, then those goods can't be delivered. An East African logistics agent explained this:

> The goods I sent last week by air cargo—there's a carton we put aside because it had no name. The supplier didn't write the name of the customer. That will cost the customer two weeks of his business! This is a very common occurrence here in China. . . . The correct way would be for the factory to deliver the goods directly to the customer, and the customer brings them to me and gives

Figure 16 Goods in warehouse waiting to be sent (photo by Gordon Mathews)

> his name. I can't send anonymous goods! In this case, we found the name of the customer only through the customer's complaints. This is something that's not normal in international trade. How do you send goods with no name? But very often this seems to happen.

Low-end globalization, as we've seen, is hindered in China because of its cross-cultural nature. If the logistics agent can be skipped, with the trader working directly with the supplier, then the trader can make more money since the factory will for large orders take charge of shipments. But this typically involves spurning the aid of one's own countrymen to deal instead directly with Chinese, which involves its own risks. There is also the matter of copies. One East African logistics agent told us, with remarkable frankness:

> Our principle is that we don't know where you buy it, but if you bring any goods, we ship it for you. But we don't ship brand names. Or rather, technically we don't do it, but we will. . . . We have the list of brand names in our office that we won't ship, because if they're coming from China, they're copies: Chanel, Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Hugo Boss, Nike. . . . Don't buy it. But if you bring it, we can ship it.

But sometimes luck runs out. One logistics agent had a container detained in 2015:

> There was an excess of copy goods in the container. The permitted amount was five cubic meters for copies. But our clients didn't tell us, partly because they themselves didn't know what was a copy, and so we didn't inform our customs contact guy. If we'd known there were lots of copies, we would have gone to our customs guy and paid in advance. No, I've never met him, but my Chinese contacts know him. We'd have needed to pay US$50. The consequence of being caught was that we were fined US$2,000, and the container was delayed for ten days. There were angry customers calling me about the delay. It's always possible that the agent himself made the whole thing up to get more money from us. Of course there's no formal notice or receipt saying, "pay $2,000." It's all under the table. If I had been inspecting the goods, I would have known about these copies. But I'm not the owner of the goods, so I can't be blamed. The $2,000 we lost equals four containers' worth of profits.

He was caught at the end of the season, when the Chinese New Year was approaching. Chinese customs agents at that time of year need more money for family obligations and seek to extract it any way they can. But he also should have been more careful, as he acknowledged—if he'd paid Chinese customs a small fee in advance, the problem never would have happened. As a logistics agent, the delay of the container is of fundamental importance—his business success depends upon his ability to deliver goods on time, and a bit of carelessness and bad luck meant that he couldn't do this.

Among the dangers that the logistics agents we know have had to face in Guangzhou is that of drugs. As one agent told us, with perhaps only a touch of hyperbole:

> A customer calls: "I want to come and do business in China. Please send me an invitation." What do you do? You don't know that customer, yet you need the business. That customer, you've never met her before, says, "I'm coming by night; I've never been to China; please meet me at the airport." You just trust in God—you don't even know if she's carrying drugs in her stomach. But if you don't do it, somebody else will, and take that business. We're always walking a tightrope. It's a very dangerous business to be in.

Drugs were more feared than actually encountered by the logistics agents we know, but once, in March 2014, a client gave a Chinese employee of an African logistics agent a package he wanted to send to Nigeria, saying that it contained milk heaters. The clerk was suspicious: milk heaters cost 20 RMB each, so why

was this client sending them by air freight for 400 RMB? Why was he willing to pay for forty-five kilos (the minimum weight the cargo office would handle) when his goods weighed only ten kilos? She assumed he was sending copy products, but when she checked the contents of the package, it did indeed contain milk heaters and tea pots, with the pedestals bent out of shape and heavier than they should be. Upon taking apart the pedestals, a kilo of powder was found, which she and her colleagues assumed was methamphetamine.*

She and her fellow employees and their African boss pondered what to do. One possibility was to call the client and give him back the package without calling the police; but this would place them in jeopardy if the police came by and found that they held a package carrying drugs. Another possibility was to call the police—but if the police sought to capture the client but failed, he might come back to the cargo agent to seek revenge for their having contacted the police and turning him in. Eventually, after considerable debate, they called the police, who came to their office, checked the CCTV of the mall, and tracked the man through his phone number. (Why did he leave his real phone number?) He was caught the following day. The police told the logistics agent employee that the man was Nigerian, with a pregnant Chinese wife. Trafficking methamphetamine is a death-penalty offense in China.

The employee was later invited to the police station to attend a meeting about drugs, but she skipped it, asking people of another cargo company to sign the attendance sheet for her. Her African boss was relieved that the suspect was caught, because as long as the suspect remained at large, he couldn't be in the office, since he lacked a proper working visa, and the police might ask to see his papers. He had run away, saying, "You handle this. I'm not your partner; I'm not your boss!" But once the suspect was caught, he could safely go back to work.

Stories such as this are dramatic, but mostly what a logistics agent must deal with is more mundane, such as answering customers' frequent phone calls. One logistics agent ruefully explained that "cargo agents are like call girls. Our clients can call us any time they want, Sunday morning 5:00 a.m., and we have to speak to them nicely. . . . Yes, we must always be nice to our clients; otherwise I'll be in an empty office!" Over and over again, we overheard phone conversations such as this: "Yes, I'm completely certain that I saw your items in the office. Are they

*Heroin and cocaine are almost never sent from China to Africa, but only in the opposite direction, from Africa to China. On the other hand, methamphetamine is often made in China in underground labs and sent overseas.

from many suppliers or one supplier? The goods will be sent by air on Friday. Please don't worry—I'll send whatever we receive."

Sometimes Chinese suppliers also complain to the logistics agent. When a customer has had goods delivered to the agent's warehouse but has not yet paid for the goods, the suppliers may angrily converge on the logistics agent. When one agent we know is confronted by suppliers who accuse him of helping the customer to cheat, he tells them, "I myself am the victim of that customer." He said to us:

> It works sometimes. We've never yet had someone physically attack us. After this, yes, I get angry at the customer for not paying. I don't shout at the customer—I leave that for my employee. He's very aggressive, very rude. Back in Nairobi we send someone to that person's shop, to say, "You know, you've really messed up our business!" He does this in front of everybody so the shopkeeper feels embarrassed. And if that doesn't work, he will call that person's parents. You can't call the police. They will say, "How can you prove this?" Shame is the best way.

Another worry is goods getting stolen. Containers as a whole almost never vanish, and sea freight is safer than air freight, because small, valuable goods are more readily susceptible to theft by roving hands. As an East African air freight specialist said:

> You can't pinpoint where a theft occurs, because these goods change hands many times, from the factory, to the middleman, to Shenzhen or Hong Kong, to Dubai, to Kenya. Sometimes they're taken by customs, sometimes by Chinese workers, sometimes in Hong Kong, sometimes in Dubai. Maybe a new staff member checks the goods for the wrong city. That carton may end up in Afghanistan.

As a Nigerian air freight specialist said, "If the airline loses my package, they will only compensate 20 percent of the total kilos. This falls back on the logistic company. Sometimes the airline workers steal the goods when the guards are not watching. This often happens in impoverished cities like Addis Ababa. A hungry man does whatever he must do to sustain his living." He also said that he had been assaulted in his office by clients whose goods had been lost. "I always must be ready to defend myself."

Middlemen

Almost all the logistics agents we know are also middlemen. The economic role of middlemen involves serving as a bridge between a customer who seeks to buy and a producer who seeks to sell. This is particularly key within globalization, when the middleman may cross cultures to make this possible, as anthropologists have discussed,[4] serving as an agent of globalization while making a profit. Typically, African logistics agents in Guangzhou have customers who decide not to travel to China and who would rather send their money to someone they trust to handle their business for a commission. In one agent's words, "If you're lucky, you can get a potential buyer saying, 'I don't want to come to China anymore. Next time, place the order for me.' She'll give you an additional $100 for each container, or a 5 percent commission." Many also have customers who lack the inclination to figure out the optimal sourcing for the goods they seek and ask logistics agents to do this, again for a commission; some also have customers who have money but don't know what to buy.

Logistics agents deal with Chinese suppliers in the transport of goods from factory production to their warehouses; in many cases, they come to know and largely trust the Chinese suppliers they deal with on a regular basis. They also deal with their own African fellow citizens or ethnics—middlemen of a trader's own cultural background, vouched for by the trader's friends, serve an essential role in making business possible. One Somali Kenyan middleman related:

> Today somebody called me from Kenya. He asked me to source solar equipment for him—I don't know the guy, and I don't know who gave him my contact, but of course I'll source for him, that's my job. Somebody gave him my name. Now I have the invoice, for US$13,000. And this guy will send the money without ever seeing me. If I run away with the money, where could he get me? But he calculates that I'm established here. And he's testing me, saying if I do I well, more will come. We are a small community. I'll have no place to hide if I run away with the money!

Just as not all logistics agents are middlemen, not all middlemen are logistics agents. Most African traders with experience in China seek to become middlemen, and if they have acquaintances coming from their home countries to Guangzhou, they may be able to play this role on occasion. We know African medical students who serve as middlemen; they can do this because, unlike al-

most all traders and many middlemen, they can speak Chinese well. But logistics agents are in a particularly advantageous position, because they have built up a relationship of trust with their customers and with suppliers and can often make a good portion of their income from acting as middlemen.

Our interviewees typically receive many inquiries from prospective traders, but most come to naught. As a Kenyan logistics agent/middleman said:

> Someone called about buying a juice-making machine but had no idea of the capacity he wanted; another called about buying plastic bags but couldn't specify the size he wanted. I get two or three inquiries a day, but a serious one maybe once a week, or once a month. Ninety-nine per cent of these inquiries will not go through.

This man said that if he were to engage in trade with the same goods as his customers, they would think he's stealing from them—stealing their designs, which are what are most secret for these traders. The only people, other than the traders themselves, who know these designs are the factory suppliers and the logistics agents. He is free to be a middleman for all other goods in the world, from juicing machines to plastic bags, but not clothing, the realm of goods he knows best. Sometimes these prospective deals become remarkably global in breadth, such as a call from a Dutch man who sought to import chicken feet from Lithuania into China and enquired to a Somali middleman about this, who told us, "He's looking for a buyer, and seems very professional. He sent me the specifications on my mobile phone. For Europeans, chicken feet are garbage but people in China eat them: that's the beauty of the deal. He has four containers of chicken feet ready to be sent." The deal never came through, but these are the kinds of deals that middlemen seek, linking prospective buyers and sellers around the world in deals that benefit both, and of course the middleman as well. A Ghanaian logistics agent said:

> We had a customer from Mozambique, looking for *halal* frozen whole chicken. We can't get it in China, but I checked the Netherlands, because I know that's where *halal* chicken is made for the Western European market. Probing a bit, I found out that most chicken in the Netherlands comes from Brazil; they just repack it. I have one customer from Brazil and asked him to put me in contact with a *halal* chicken producer—he could. The price was amazing. I'm not only sourcing from China, but from anywhere. What they need, we have to work

> to find—that's our job. One of the people from the Netherlands I spoke with was originally from Iraq, and told me that his father is running for office—if he gets in, then he'll pass lots of contracts over to us to manage. These are the kinds of opportunities I'm looking for.

Once a deal seems plausible, then the commission becomes an issue. As a Nigerian logistics agent told us:

> What's an appropriate commission? It depends on the goods you're sourcing. If it's heavy machinery, you might charge 10 percent. It's not something that you can go to one place and make your order—you may need to visit factories in other Chinese provinces. Yes, you pay your own expenses from the 10 percent. For other commissions, it may be 3 percent, 5 percent. You reach an agreement, but at the end of the day, the trader might bargain it down a little. You think, "Maybe I can do away with 2 or 1 percent." The larger the quantity, the lower the commission.

Other logistics agents from different countries have maintained to us that their standard commission is 3 percent; the exact calculation of commissions varies among different nationalities. By a Congolese agent's account, because customers come through connections as friends of relatives, the request for payment is difficult. A Ugandan we know charges his customers for things that a Somali claims he would never charge for, but would provide for free. If a middleman can arrange to obtain commissions from both the Chinese factory and African customer, this is ideal (and is boasted about by some middlemen we know). Our impression, however, is that this is more the exception than the rule unless the middleman has a long-term relationship with the Chinese factory, and that typically a commission comes only from one side, the customer, in return for which the middlemen negotiates the manufacturing of goods, inspects the finished goods, and arranges for their transport.

Virtually all traders seek to be middlemen; by the same token, experienced traders seek not to have to go through a middleman. The commission a middleman can typically make may seem remarkably easy money to an entrepreneur who is in a position to connect an African trader and a Chinese factory. But this commission may be felt to be an unnecessary drain on profits to a trader who seeks to deal directly with the factory on his own. Indeed, middlemen themselves in their dealings strive to bypass other middlemen. A Congolese middleman described to us how he got around a Chinese middleman: he spied the factory logo

in the background of a poster, got the factory phone number, and called. At first the factory wouldn't deal with him, but after he slipped US$500 to an employee, the middleman was forgotten. On the other hand, a Ghanaian middleman spoke of himself being spurned:

> I introduced a West African customer to the factory. While we were loading the container, I saw her brother go to the Chinese manager and exchange phone numbers. They're doing it for future business. We've brought a customer to the factory—I've spent a lot of time designing the customer's product with her, and checking out factories with her. Now she'll call the factory in the future and get a cheaper price. But what she doesn't realize is that we've signed a contract with the factory for a certain quality. When she gets products of an inferior quality, she'll say that Chinese products are no good. Yes, most factories will undercut you if they can, to bypass the commission. When customers seek to get around us, the middlemen, there's nothing you can do about it. In China, you're not going to take them to court.

A Kenyan middleman to whom we related this example said, "Once you've allowed the customer to go to the factory, it's already too late. Next time you'll not be needed for sure. Why does the client need your help once he knows the factory?"

All the middlemen we spoke with vociferously argued that their own role in aiding their clients was essential. A Senegalese middleman said:

> We had a customer who wanted washing powder, her own brand. I explained to her the tricks of the trade: you could request thirty-five-gram packets of washing powder and a cheaper price, but what the factory will do is put in thirty-four grams instead of thirty-five. The average African buyer will look at the product, see how beautiful it is, check if it has bubbles, and they're satisfied. Little do our customers know that we're here to protect them, to check on what's required.

A Nigerian middleman expanded on this:

> Without someone to do the inspection of goods, traders may end up losing their money. They go back to Africa and then request directly to the Chinese factory, "Give me two hundred thousand pieces." The Chinese then go for the lower quality. If you're the middleman, you have the responsibility to check

> the sizes, the quality, the quantity. But if there's no middleman, no one will do this.

As these comments indicate, a conscientious middleman does not simply take the customer's money and check on the Alibaba website to find a Chinese factory, the most common and remarkably easy means by which to find a supplier. "Alibaba alone you absolutely cannot trust," we've been told numerous times by middleman, both because the enticingly cheap prices listed there will often turn out not to be true in the end, and also because many of the companies listed either don't manufacture the products they claim or do not even exist—they are fronts to skim off slices of profit. A conscientious middleman may start with Alibaba, but then use his Chinese and African connections to find out a supplier's reputation, visit factories to see the quality of their production and later carefully check the factory's delivered goods to see if they meet the customer's specifications. Sometimes this is difficult, if the goods sought by the client are beyond the middleman's expertise. As the Senegalese logistics agent said:

> In sourcing, I try to use companies within the Guangdong area so that I can see them. If a company is out of town, then I send my employee to visit, to make sure the company is real. If the company really exists, and the goods are specialized, then there are specialists in Hong Kong and China who I can appoint to go and inspect the goods: they can take a sample for analysis and inspect the loading.

He is more conscientious (and more expensive) than most middlemen, who simply guess, using more rough and ready judgments: "If it is a big company, they have enough money, they don't need to cheat. But the smaller the company, the more likely they will try to cheat you." However, this middleman too visits: "You go to the company and you can see: the way they welcome you, the way they treat you, what they have, how well and hygienically they manufacture, how many workers they have. My customers most need me to prevent them from being cheated."

A Nigerian middleman provides a larger rationale for the middleman's role:

> Chinese suppliers like to rely on customers more than on you, because they know that you are here to give them trouble if anything goes wrong. They prefer a customer from afar. Yes, the customer needs us but the factory needs us too; customers don't know where to find their goods, and factories don't

know where to find customers. Most of the factories with a better understanding of business don't want to intrude. They know they need us.

Most African middlemen we know don't use Chinese middlemen counterparts. As one East African said, "Why would I use a middleman? If someone back home expressed an interest in a product, I'd just go directly to Alibaba to source there" (since much content on Alibaba is in English). But sometimes the African introduces African customers to Chinese suppliers through a Chinese middleman; the Chinese finds African customers through an African middleman. Chinese and African middlemen are in competition over customers, but sometimes they work together. A Congolese told of how he got together with a Chinese middleman to moderate the price they were asking of the customer; he said to the Chinese middleman, "The price you're giving is too high. I want a little bit; you want a little bit; let's both make sure that the price isn't beyond what the customer will pay." The Chinese middleman agreed, and they compromised on a price that they felt was fair.

A bane of African traders in China is the many layers of middlemen. On the other hand, without middlemen, African traders without extensive experience can easily be taken advantage of. A good middleman uses his knowledge of Chinese factories and production and his own legwork to ensure that deals proceed smoothly. But while everyone wants to be a middleman, a conscientious middleman, going every step of the way, is unusual. More typical is to take the client's money, do a little checking, and then hope that everything works out in the end, as it usually but not always does.

Cultural Brokers

The logistics agents we know typically function as middlemen, and the middlemen often function as cultural brokers.[5] The term "cultural broker" is not much used by anthropologists[6] but probably should be, because in an age of globalization, the role has become important as never before. Until recently, a journey between societies across the globe was a long process, but today an African trader can get on a plane in Lagos or Nairobi and arrive in China in twenty-four hours without having the slightest idea about the society to which he or she has arrived. We've spoken with traders who told us that when they first arrived in China, they assumed that Chinese eat nothing but dogs, and that all Chinese can fly through the air delivering kung fu kicks like Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan. Because many of these traders are in China for a brief period, they need to quickly learn

how China works. The people they turn to for this instruction are very often logistics agents.

Not all logistics agents are cultural brokers; some, mostly Chinese but also some Africans, keep their interactions with customers to a minimum. Others, such as more experienced traders and sometimes ministers, also sometimes play this role of practical and cultural advice giver. But by and large it is logistics agents and middlemen who serve as cultural brokers. How do African traders learn to survive in China? Where, to cite just a few of the most common questions newcomers ask, do you find Nigerian (or Kenyan or Congolese) food in Guangzhou? How do you rent an apartment? Where can you go when you get sick? When do you need to report to Chinese police about your status? How should you behave toward Chinese police if they stop you? How can you most easily renew your visa? How can you find a Chinese supplier? How, on a long-term basis, can you avoid getting cheated in business dealings with Chinese? How can you make Chinese friends? What do you need to understand if you become romantically involved with a Chinese? Questions like these go beyond the particular business dealings described in the last two sections, but they may urgently require answers.

Chinese typically can't or won't answer such questions; very often they don't know themselves. Fellow traders may provide information, but it may or may not be reliable; they may know where to find a good restaurant, but not how to find a reliable supplier or adhere to registration rules vis-à-vis the police. Ministers provide moral guidance but not practical guidance. Logistics agents and middlemen most often know how to answer questions like those asked above because of their long-term experience in China. They typically don't do this simply out of the goodness of their hearts, but for business; they need to keep their customers happy so that their customers won't leave them. This may lead to an extraordinary degree of solicitousness, in providing services ranging from food and accommodations to consultations over visas to visits to medical clinics. A significant part of a logistic agent's day may be spent arranging such services. As one East African logistics agent said:

> My Chinese staff is out getting a bank account for a customer. We also get hotel rooms for customers, take them to the market, show them around, and take them for visa extension. Any other needs they may have, we take care of. Also we pay the suppliers on behalf of the customers. No, we don't calculate any of this in payment; this is provided for them as customers. Longtime customers can even stay at my apartment: we have many extra beds. Some people stay

> three days, and some a month. For the first three days, it's free, but if you stay longer we'll ask you to contribute. We have a cook making Kenyan food for them and someone to clean their clothes. My Kenyan staff member and I share one room; the other rooms are for customers. We're not going to bring home girlfriends, so we don't need privacy!

One night this logistics agent was told that a longtime customer had come to his apartment and fallen asleep in his bed. Instead of waking the customer up and asking him to move to another bed, he accompanied me, sheepishly, to a cheap hotel to ask for a room—he would rather sleep in a hotel room than disturb his customer.

His solicitousness is beyond that of what many logistics agents do. A Nigerian cargo agent had his own good reasons for keeping his care for customers more minimal:

> Some people have customers staying with them but I don't. Man's heart is deceitful, the Bible tells me. Why would I take someone to my room? Come with money, and we'll do business in my office. I don't have papers, I'm not legal; if you bring another person to stay with you, you're increasing the risk. Better for them to stay in a hotel.

This is a matter of legality versus illegality—it's far easier to be nice to customers when you don't have to worry about police coming to snatch you away. It is also an issue of size. Nigerian logistics agents seem less solicitous of their clients than logistics agents from various smaller African countries, because the huge population of Nigerian Igbos means that the claims of personal reputation don't travel so smoothly. The Nigerian Igbo entrepreneur may not know the customers who come to his office, whereas those of smaller ethnic groupings in Guangzhou may indeed know or can investigate if they don't; personal linkages create greater solicitousness. Nonetheless, all the low-end logistics agents we know act as cultural brokers, in the sense that they readily dispense advice to their clients above and beyond the immediate business of sending goods.

I mentioned in chapter 4 how the offices of logistics agents who practice low-end globalization are typically places where customers can relax and hang out, unlike the business-only offices characteristic of high-end globalization. This is part of the cultural brokering of the logistics agents we know. When there is a common gathering place for traders, they can talk and learn from one another, as well as from the logistics agent. Ethnic restaurants can sometimes fulfill this

function, but more often it is the logistics agents' offices. We know of several offices where the agent must gently shoo customers out at closing time, which is not formally set forth, but is simply when the agents become too tired to keep working.

We asked the cargo agents we know whether they felt that, aside from their business concerns as cargo agents and middlemen, they were cultural brokers, or even cultural ambassadors, mediating between the cultural worlds of their customers and that of Guangzhou. Some felt we were exaggerating—in one Nigerian's words, "I'm just trying to earn a living, that's all!" But a more reflective East African pondered:

> No, I don't really feel that I'm a cultural ambassador. These people [my customers] do things by themselves. But yes, that guy you just saw—I went to the hospital with him for three hours—he said he was feeling dizzy, so I had to help. If that constitutes ambassadorship, maybe I am a cultural ambassador. I can do this without knowing Chinese—the doctors there can speak English. And one of the guys here, I took him to immigration to extend his visa. He felt that the staff there were rude, but I told him that no, he was rude—he asked a staff member to come and help him while she was attending to somebody else. He tapped her on the shoulder—he can't do that; he should have waited his turn! I always find myself mediating disputes between Chinese suppliers and African traders—I tell the traders they're wrong! Maybe that's being a cultural ambassador.

In chastising his fellow countryman for bad behavior at the immigration office, this man is teaching him how to behave properly in the Chinese world. In mediating disputes between Chinese suppliers and African buyers, he plays this role in both directions, teaching his fellow Africans how properly to do business in a Chinese context, and teaching Chinese suppliers how their customers think.

Often, cultural brokers rely on their Chinese office staff to do some of these tasks. Logistics offices may have very capable Chinese staff, typically young women with good English skills, who function as interpreters, and who also provide advice in a range of areas, if they have sufficient knowledge and confidence to do so; but once they acquire such knowledge and confidence, they tend to leave to start their own businesses involving African trade. Logistics agents also do much of this work themselves. We've heard, to take just a few of numerous examples, a Congolese logistics agent explaining in detail how an African customer might get a driving license in China; a Senegalese agent explaining to a client the complexities of contracts in China and whether or not one should sign one; and

a Nigerian agent discussing with authority the psychology of Chinese women as romantic partners to a rapt audience of traders. This is street-level cultural ambassadorship. It is a matter of business—their cultural ambassadorship is finally in pursuit of profit—but that makes it no less real.

Despite their roles mediating between Africa and China, the cultural brokers we know often have ambivalent feelings toward China as a place to make a life; most would rather not make China their home in the future. Of the ten logistics agents/cultural brokers we know well—four from Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal, two from the Congo, and four from Kenya or Somalia—only three are fluent speakers of Mandarin Chinese. Most others speak some Chinese—enough to get by on the street, but not to engage in complicated negotiations—but several speak no Chinese at all, something that does not seem to appreciably hurt their business, since they can rely on their Chinese employees. Nor does it seem to have much effect on their role as cultural brokers if they can marshal others to occasionally serve as interpreters.

A Congolese logistics agent/cultural broker said that he sometimes feels China is his home, but he is embittered by his experiences with racism. "China is a good place to make a living, but not to make a life," he told us; he dreams of living in Europe or the United States. A Kenyan cultural broker who maintains an apartment in Hong Kong says that when he crosses the border to Hong Kong, he feels like he has come home. Other Kenyans say they are in China only for business, and seek to return to Kenya to live once they have enough money. The Nigerians say that China could never feel like home, much as they like aspects of life in China, due to their status as overstayers. These cultural brokers' attitudes toward China are colored by their visa status, with five relatively secure and five not: clearly you can't feel at home in a country that might expel you at any time. However, none of these men are completely assured as to visa status, and this prevents any of them from feeling as if they are "African Chinese"; they cannot afford to become too secure in their adopted country. Another factor shaping their attitudes toward China is romantic relations. One of these men has a Chinese wife and children with her (which helps in gaining long-term residence status in China but does not assure it); two others have long-term Chinese girlfriends. Many of the others, particularly the Kenyans, have wives and children back in Kenya or other countries.

None of these cultural brokers feel that China could be home—these men, of all the Africans we know in Guangzhou, might be expected to feel this, but none do. This isn't because they don't like aspects of China; it's because both Chinese society and the Chinese government, through its visa policy, want to keep them at arm's length.

Accounts of Logistics Agents, Middlemen, and Cultural Brokers

Noor

I was born in Somalia. I left in 1991 and went to Saudi Arabia to university; I'm in my late thirties. I joined a large multinational shipping firm; I eventually quit that company and became independent. My business is as a middleman and logistics agent between African traders and Chinese sellers. I mostly deal in textiles, ready-made garments. My customers buy them and send them to my warehouse; I compress and send them to Mombasa. We Somalis shouldn't only bring things from China to sell in Somalia; we should also bring things from Somalia to sell: seafood products, like lobster, shark's fin although it's controversial, casings for sausage: those are made from goats' intestines. If things go well, maybe I'll move to Somalia for good! My wife and my four children now live in Sweden—education is better there—they live with my in-laws. I call them every day on Skype. I try to spend four months a year with them, in Sweden or here. Maybe my kids would find it difficult adjusting to life back in Somalia, but things are changing for the better there. I was in Mogadishu last month. Yes, Al-Shabaab, the terrorist group there, set off bombs recently—but I'm just a trader, I'm not involved in politics; I'm safe, unless I'm at the wrong place at the wrong time. Once peace returns to Somalia, it's paradise on earth!

Here in China, you have to subcontract to the mainland Chinese, like my warehouse guy. This means you pay, but you can stay out of trouble. I don't have to hire and pay Chinese workers; they handle all those problems. How do I find clients? I meet them in the Arab restaurants I eat at. Also, I meet people in the mosque and on the streets: I can recognize Somalis when I see them. Unstable regulations in Africa, that's my biggest worry. Most of my clients are not buying copies. My clients are focusing on the rural Kenyan masses. A Kenyan farmer is not interested in whether you're selling Nike or not! If in a shipment of garments, I discover a hundred Samsung Galaxy phones, I tell my clients to take it back. It's not safe to send mobile phones by container. It can be stolen in Kenya by the guys offloading things. If it's stolen, we have to compensate. It's garments that we know—if you give us ten bags, we deliver you ten bags, we check every bag that comes to our warehouse. How do weapons get into Somalia? Not by shipping container, but most likely through the Ethiopian border, by truck with the knowledge of the Ethiopian government, or by plane with the knowledge of the Eritrean government. We don't worry about that here.

No one wants to ship guns from China to Somalia! There are enough guns in Somalia already!

I'm tired because of all the pressure I'm getting from customers. No, I don't get angry at customers; or rather, if I'm angry, I don't show it. If you do that, you lose customers. Only once did I become angry: an old man I shouted at. He called me and said, "Can you e-mail me my packing receipts?" I e-mailed him several times; he called and said, "Noor, stop lying to me! We've never received the e-mails." I got angry and said, "Please don't call me again, don't send me your money, don't send me your goods," and hung up. Eventually I found that he didn't know how to use e-mail: he was paying a boy to go to an Internet café, but the boy wanted to go back again and again to play games. That's the only time I've ever gotten angry at a customer. Sometimes I'm accused of being too soft, but I say, that's what service is all about. I have a stake in customers coming back—I try to appease everybody. It's part of my business.

Sahir

I worked for the government in Kenya; I became a businessman in 2009, two years before I came to Hong Kong. I have a family back home in Kenya—a wife and several children, now teenagers. I'm in my forties. I go back home every six months to see my family for two months. The Chinese in the office are used to interacting with Africans; English is the dominant language here.

I don't like China in some respects: the language problem, and the fraud. The customer from Kenya orders online, and then when the goods reach Kenya, they're totally different from what the customer had asked for. It hurts me because this is my customer. I try to help. These cameras and other goods you see here, I went and picked them up from the factory; otherwise, the customer would have had to wait several weeks. A woman wanted to buy ladies' bags to sell on Valentine's Day in Kenya. There was no time for her to send money here, so I paid for her, and she sent the money to my family. Yes, I give credit, but only to people I know well—I'm not crazy!

There is a high rate of pilferage by customs officials in Kenya. Not stealing. They'll do this in front of you, they'll go over laptops and keep one. So there are goods we don't carry, like small iPads and telephones—we'll lose them. We carry only clothing materials, shoes, bags, and CCTV cameras, big stuff. In Kenya, it's easy to do anything as long as you have money. The recent presidential election in Kenya was stolen with ballots printed in Guangzhou. They removed the logo "Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission,"

which confirms it's not correct. They came to Guangzhou with the stamp that validates the ballot papers and made copies here with votes already marked. Kenyan printing companies don't have the technology to make it look genuine, like they do here. I know several people who helped carry the ballots back to Kenya.

I haven't found any guns or drugs in our shipments, but there was a time our company suffered a big setback. A Kenyan woman delivered cargo to the Chinese warehouse man and flew out that night. When it came to loading, all six boxes of these goods were found to be pornographic cassettes, forbidden by the Chinese government. It was a nightmare for us! They arrested the Chinese man who loaded them and the Kenyan man in our office—we didn't even know which city he was being held in. Meanwhile, the other customers using the container had their goods delayed by three months as a consequence.

A trader can get a visa for China in Hong Kong, but you'll get only a few days. Before it was three months. Traders can't cope with the few days they're given, and leave me the receipts to follow up when the goods are ready. Yes, I make money this way! But I don't work on commissions. I'll serve the customer well, advise them of the dangers, help them go to any market they want to go to. If at the end of the day, they offer me money—"Sahir, here's US$300"—I'll take it. But it's not a condition.

When I see that something has little probability of getting through safely, I refuse to carry it. Or I might carry it in my personal luggage—when I recently traveled back to Kenya, I carried fifteen small items for my customers for free and delivered them to their shops, including two satellite phones. The Kenyan customs officials had their eyes on my two big bags—no one paid any attention to my hand luggage! I had nothing for them to tax in my big bags! If they had checked, they couldn't have stolen anything, because I was right there, but they could have bothered me by doing calculation of value, things like that. You should have seen the reaction of customers, seeing their goods so much more quickly, and delivered by me to them, for free!

I have a new second wife, as Islam allows. My first wife wasn't happy at first. But time heals all wounds! Of course she didn't talk to me for a while. But I took her on vacation, bought her a few gold rings, and it's over. I even took my first wife and second wife to lunch together. . . . I'm worried about my youngest son. He was suddenly interested in going to the mosque. I was suspicious: why is a kid his age interested in going to the mosque? I found that he was going off to play video games—the boy was lying. I need to go back to Kenya to take care of this.

Antoine

I'm from the Congo. I have a shipping office in Xiaobei and have been in Guangzhou for ten years; I'm in my early forties. I'm a cargo agent and a supplier. Customers can't simply contact the factory directly—a lot of customers see goods advertised on Alibaba from a factory contact, but there's no such place; the customers transfer their money through the bank, and never see it again. A supplier told me and my customer that he could make computers for 800 RMB—impossibly low. It turns out that there was no factory supplying these computers. The Chinese supplier told the customer he was in Shenzhen, but he had an international phone number, making him impossible to trace. When I told him we knew what he was doing, the phone connection was quickly cut. I tell customers, "We can go to this supplier, and I will get a commission. Or you can go to that supplier, who is cheaper, and I won't get a commission. That's fine: but remember, if you go with them, I won't be able to help you if anything goes wrong." Customers are sometimes naïve—they see a new iPhone for 3,000 RMB and then a copy for 1,000 RMB, and will think, "Let's go for the 1,000 RMB one." They're only looking for cheap products, but of course those cheap products often aren't any good.

I had a Chinese girlfriend whom I was planning to marry but we couldn't, because her family didn't agree. We never communicated after her parents rejected me, not even a text message. We had been together for a long time. . . . I have a work permit in China; I am fully legal! I like China in many ways—I speak Chinese and have worked as a volunteer with the police. If I saw an African doing something bad, I might first warn them, but then I'd go to the police. But yes, my own relationship didn't work out, because I'm foreign and African and not Chinese.

Of course I send copy goods, when customers bring them—I don't know they're copies! And of course we pay off customs when necessary. You need to have relationships not just with customs but with some police too. Both the Chinese side and the Congo sides give me headaches. In both sides, many things can happen. But relations matter a lot in both places. In the Congo, you can assume that if there is a US$20,000 duty, only US$2,000 will go to the government, and the rest will go into someone's pocket. But you've got to pay—it's the only way to do it. I'm a Christian, and as a Christian, you must realize that.

There are two young Congolese women I'm advising; they're university students, but they were going shopping all the time instead of studying. I don't

know what they're doing: I work, go home and watch TV or use my computer—I don't go to clubs. I called them to go to church this morning; they said it would take them two or three hours to get ready. Yes, I had them sit in the very front row of the church! . . . A minister of our church died recently of a heart attack. He has left a wife and five children; to ship his body back to the Congo would cost 110,000 RMB. That's a huge amount of money. I say, let's just give the money to the family and cremate the body. But the other Congolese are saying, "We've got to get the body back to the Congo." They will probably prevail.

Albert

I am from Senegal. I work alongside my Chinese wife, Rebecca: she's been doing business in Xiaobei for ten years. I came to China through a friend. I realized there was a vacuum in the market—there weren't a lot of foreigners in the cargo business; it was mostly Chinese. I asked how I could start my own business in China; he introduced me to Rebecca. I went back to Senegal and to Canada, where I had business interests, and was passing business on to her. I came back and was impressed. The office was transformed. She had computers, staff—everything was organized. I thought, "This is a serious person!" Eventually we got married. But no, I wouldn't be in China if my family wasn't here. I'd probably be in Canada.

The goods I source vary. Most of the time, unless we're asked, we don't recommend factories, because clients think that if we recommend, we're getting a commission. It's amazing visiting factories in this country. In Africa, by comparison, everyone is asleep. It simply doesn't make sense to load a container of noodles here and send it to Africa. You've got so much flour in Africa! Buy a little machine and produce it there! But it doesn't work that way—everyone wants the finished product, and that's what China makes. The Chinese are coming in, taking the raw materials—in the olden days it was the Europeans and Americans, but now it's the Chinese stripping the place dry.

Rebecca went the other day to look at car tires—a Nigerian customer thought he was dealing directly with the factory, but these people were buying tires from another factory and bringing it to their massive warehouse and charging him an extra US$5,000 to put on his logo, until we were able to stop the deal. Yes, this kind of thing happens a lot here. Several of my former Chinese employees I had to get rid of: they were engaged in a side business, stealing our customers from us. I try to create a family enterprise here, but. . . .

The ringleader brought Rebecca gifts, food. Rebecca said, "Why is she doing this?" It was probably guilt. She knew what was coming: I fired her. For each container, she and the man in the office she was working with may have taken 400–500 RMB; I can't speculate how many containers they did this for, but it must have been many.

The other day a potential customer spoke with me about a contract in Senegal for electric meters. They're looking at fifty thousand units, with each unit about US$50: quite an order. I called different Chinese companies, wanting to get the best quality at a reasonable price, and they sent me different quotations; but I didn't indicate the country, because the company might send an agent to Senegal to find out who's got this contract. The Chinese are seeking to cut out the middleman. . . . There's one factory that I'm so impressed by. We have an order for a charcoal burner. I'd told the prospective customer, "Of course I can get it for you. This is China!" But when I asked the factory, I was told, "I'm not supposed to be selling this to you!" I said to the factory lady that I wanted forty containers. She said no, because they produce these only under license. She wouldn't budge! I have no idea if she can stay in business in China when she follows the legal rules!

* * *

These accounts show the common travails of logistics agents and middlemen, such as dealing with customers. Noor gets tired of customers' demands, but is (almost) always nice. Sahir goes far out of his way for customers, paying from his own pocket on occasion and smuggling in goods for them in his personal luggage. Antoine comments on the naïveté of some of his customers, and endeavors to wise them up. The common theme is the necessity of maintaining and expanding one's customer base: this is the underlying mercenary reason for cultural brokering.

There are also the travails of sending goods. There is Chinese fraud: Sahir describes the Kenyans who order online and receive faulty goods from China instead of using middlemen like himself; Antoine discusses how suppliers offer products that don't even exist, seeking to get their deposit and then vanish; and Albert discusses how he and his wife were cheated by their Chinese employees siphoning off profits into their own pockets and also discusses his amazement at discovering a Chinese supplier who obeys the law (and deprives him of profit), wondering if it can survive. There is also the difficulty of getting goods through customs, like Sahir's description of how unwittingly sending pornography led his

employees to be jailed and delayed his containers for months; and the difficulty of business in Africa—Sahir and Antoine discuss the bribes they pay in Kenya and the Congo.

There also are other glimpses into these men's dreams and disappointments. Noor dreams of Somalia and hopes to live there again—it is "a paradise on earth" once the bloodshed stops, he tells us—but wonders if his children in Sweden could ever get used to a Somali home. Antoine has had his heart broken by the parents of the Chinese woman he sought to marry, who refused to have an African son-in-law. And Albert, who apparently married his Chinese wife because she made his office function so well, seeks to go back to Canada, if only he could. Several of these men are religious. Sahir must go back to Kenya to guide his son, who says he goes to the mosque but in fact plays video games; and Antoine guides young women in his church toward the God-fearing straight and narrow. For most of these logistic agents/middlemen—although not all—their devoted religious practices of Islam or of Christianity are a part of why they are trusted as cultural brokers by fellows from their own ethnic group and country.

There are also the larger economic and political implications of their accounts. Albert notes that "in the olden days it was the Europeans and Americans, but now it's the Chinese stripping [Africa] dry." Noor speaks of his desire to help create not just a one-way flow of goods from China to Somalia, but two-way: seafood like shark's fin, and goat intestines—not very promising or environmentally ethical, but perhaps serving to lessen just a bit the vast trade deficit between the two societies. Albert wonders why China manufactures everything and not African countries. "It simply doesn't make sense to load a container of noodles here and send it to Africa"; African countries can make their own noodles but do not. In Sahir's telling, not just Kenyan goods but the Kenyan presidential election was "decided in China." Experts we have spoken with are skeptical about this claim, but this does reveal the extraordinary real or imagined impact of China on various African countries. When we related Sahir's tale to our Nigerian friends, they maintained that the last Nigerian presidential election had been stolen in the same way. And there is Albert's telling comment that "the Chinese are seeking to cut out the agent, the middleman." These men play their tiny roles within the vast and imbalanced China-Africa trade connection and hope that the current situation will continue long enough to enable them to make their livings and profits in the years and decades to come.

SEVEN

Religion in a Foreign World

"I Believe in God but Chinese Believe in Gold"

One of the most notable differences between Africans and Chinese is religious faith. It was rare to find an African who did not profess belief in God or Allah, and for most, religion was central to their lives. On the other hand, it was atypical to find Chinese who expressed any religious faith. This difference left many African traders shaking their heads in wonder, ready to attribute any Chinese malfeasance they might encounter to their lack of religion. In one West African trader's words:

> Yes, when Chinese cheat me, I think it's because they don't believe in life after death. That belief prevents a person from doing bad things. The fact that Chinese are not religious makes them more likely to cheat. When someone makes a commitment, they feel the moral obligation to fulfill that commitment: it's based on their faith. But if you don't have any faith, if you don't think that any authority will come and check on you, then the door is open to do anything.

Over and over we heard this refrain. According to one East African trader, "Chinese only have money to believe in, nothing else. . . . I believe in God. How can I trust anyone who doesn't believe in God? I don't cheat people because God is looking over me. But a Chinese has no one looking over him, so he might cheat people." In fact, the vast majority of Chinese don't cheat African traders, and familial reputation for Chinese may be as powerful a moral guide as religious belief is for Africans, but this was not recognized by African traders. Indeed, more than language, the difference in religious belief may be the biggest cultural barrier between Africans and Chinese.

The African markets of Guangyuanxi and Xiaobei are partially divided on the basis of religion. African traders based in Xiaobei are more likely to be Muslim than Christian. Many attend Friday prayer at the huge Xianxian Mosque, a fifteen-minute walk from Xiaobei. The Guangyuanxi markets, on the other hand, are more Christian: Nigerian Igbos are almost all Christian. Some African Christians are Catholic and go to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, which holds English-language Mass every Sunday afternoon. Many more go to Protestant churches, of which there are a dozen or more that African traders attend. Both the mosque and the Catholic church in Guangzhou are officially recognized by the Chinese government, but the Protestant churches are not. These underground Protestant churches to some extent antagonize the Chinese government, because it sees them as representing foreign religion; they are not officially registered and sometimes are raided by police.[1]

One cannot overestimate the role that religion plays in African and Arab traders' lives. At a Xiaobei logistics office, in the middle of a conversation my interviewee would excuse himself to pray in the corner of the office, with several others waiting their turn. Prayer would be only a minute or two in length, and to an outside observer would seem matter-of-fact; but it was always scrupulously practiced. Among some of the Muslim traders in this and other offices, I was often asked, "Why does the West want to demonize our religion? Why do they portray all Muslims as evil?" This would lead, on occasion, to hours of theological and political discussion. I found these discussions remarkable—we had come to talk about business, thinking that it was key to these people's lives, but in fact, their religion that was what they really wanted to talk about.[2] Among the Nigerians in Guangyuanxi, religion was even more apparent. Many of the names of the African shops are religious, such as "God's Mercy Merchandise," "Blessed Shop," or "God's Glory Shop"; many name cards have quotations from scripture or a picture of the cross or of Christ, or mottos such as "God is perfection," "The Lord is my strength," or "In God I trust"; and phone ringtones may consist of record-

ings of Christian preachers. Church did not involve these Igbo traders only for a few hours on Sunday—church often occupied a very large slice of their lives. Beyond the church services, there were other prayer sessions as well, for example, the daily prayers of shopkeepers in the aisles of Guangyuanxi malls. Yang noted how the leader of one such session, a shopkeeper, "called to God with his eyes closed. 'Help us revive our business. We need protection from You. Hallelujah! You are our defense. You are our strength. You are our power.' The speech was echoed among the crowd of 15 Nigerians . . . who held hands with each other with their eyes shut."[3]

Many of these people were overstayers and thus faced not just the pressure of business but also the possibility of being arrested at any time. Some overstayers maintained that the protection given them by God prevented them from getting caught; and indeed, their faith may have given them sufficient confidence so that police would not stop and check them, assuming that no one who looked so confident could be an overstayer. But even for those Christians who were not overstayers, religion is essential—in several cases, after discussing business, a trader would say, "But the real reason I have come to China is because the Lord called me here." I was assumed to be Christian, but Yang was pressured to become a believer in prayer sessions, and when Linessa resisted, she was only semi-jokingly accused of being a Chinese spy.

We met a very few religious skeptics, such as Mack, in chapter 2, who fled Iran because he disbelieved in Islam. We also met a Nigerian trader who was nominally Christian who said, "Many preachers use the money from worshippers for themselves—they say, 'If you put money in your offering, good things will come back to you,' but that makes no sense. I go to church sometimes, but no, I don't particularly believe it." But these people were rare. Most people we met were devoutly faithful. Even those who occasionally veered from their faith's tenets—like the beer-drinking Omar in chapter 2—stoutly maintained that their faith was the most important thing in their lives.

Islam in Comparison to Christianity

The dominant religious act among Muslims is prayer five times a day. The New Don Franc building has its own prayer space where Muslims gather, but often this is done with one's associates in an office space, or alone. Prayer with others brings more merit, but prayer anywhere is most essential. Every Friday, many Muslims—Africans, Arabs, Hui, Uyghurs, Pakistanis, and Indians—go to Xianxian Mosque to pray in the early afternoon, their one weekly visit to

the mosque.* The imam—the mosque is officially recognized by the Chinese government, so the imam is Chinese—may give a short sermon on the morality of business or other Islamic topics. There is a sermon in Arabic, which many foreign Muslims can understand since they have often been hearing Arabic since childhood as part of their religious training, and a sermon in Chinese. Outside the entrance to the mosque there is an alley crammed with street vendors, Chinese Muslims selling *halal* food and other Islamic articles, Chinese beggars seeking alms (and often doing well, since to give to the needy is a prescription of Islam—we have seen beggars with 100-yuan notes in their begging plates), and worshippers of every nationality on their way home after prayers. This street is more international than any of the churches we have attended in Guangzhou, which are sometimes focused on a single ethnicity—this is Islamic globalization, although after prayers, almost everyone goes their ethnically separate ways.

We have gone to the Xianxian Mosque and its Friday service from time to time and have always felt comfortable there, despite not being Muslim; but once, at the festival of Eid on October 15, 2013, I found myself forced to pray. There must have been close to ten thousand people in the mosque area, indoors and outdoors, with every available inch of space covered with prayer rugs. When praying began, I had no choice but to follow suit, since there was no space for onlookers, and everyone for hundreds of square yards around me was praying. However, this was difficult because there are scriptures chanted and ritualized movements, which I did not know. I was surrounded by Uyghurs beginning their prayers, and had no other place I could go to without being even more conspicuous, and so I joined in, doing my best to imitate them. I could see that the man next to me was looking at me quizzically, and it crossed my mind that someone might shout to the praying throngs, "There's a Western infidel in our midst pretending to be Muslim!" But this, fortunately, did not happen. Linessa, hair hidden under a scarf, went to the female section, where there were dozens of women standing or sitting without praying. It was like a kindergarten, she reported, with children crying and playing. Where I was, during the sermon, men looked at their cell phones and chatted—the imam was no more than a distant voice emanating from a loudspeaker—but during the few minutes of prayer, everyone was very serious indeed.

*Traders also go to other mosques in Guangzhou. There is Huaisheng, attended by a number of Arabs, and Xiaodongying, which is popular among Africans. At Xianxian, a new prayer hall was completed in 2010 to meet the needs of Muslim athletes participating in the 2010 Asian Games, which made it the largest mosque in Guangzhou, attracting the most foreign Muslims to pray.

Figure 17. Prayer at Eid (photo by Gordon Mathews)

Islamic service, both at Eid and on other days, is different from that of the Protestant churches we attended, in that it involves set prayers, a systematic recitation of scriptures. As a Muslim trader told us:

> When I pray, of course I don't pray that I need to make a certain amount of profit. Muslims don't do that. We pray our normal, mandatory prayer for Muslims. No, there aren't other Islamic meetings Sunday night or Tuesday night or other times, only Friday services. Islam is individual: it's a matter of your own praying, your own faith.

Islam requires less group involvement than do Guangzhou's underground Protestant churches, and is also more formalized, in that believers do not typically engage in private conversations with Allah, as do Christians in prayer with God. The Koran itself offers a more structured set of rules as to how one should behave than does the Bible, with the Bible's different books saying somewhat different things. I went with African trader friends to an interfaith discussion between a Protestant minister and a Muslim imam in Hong Kong, at which a South Asian listener said, "In Islam, it is very clear from the Holy Koran what rules we are to follow in our lives. But the Bible doesn't seem to have those clear rules. Why

not?" The Protestant minister could only say that the Bible is not simply a rulebook, but demands more careful consideration.

Another difference between Christian and Muslim gatherings is that in the mosque, foreign Muslims and Chinese Muslims can pray side by side—in fact they usually don't, but there is no rule against this—and some African Muslims said that they develop friendly relations with Chinese Muslims through prayer together.* In Protestant churches, this does not often happen: Chinese faces are scrutinized, and in some cases unless officially invited beforehand, Chinese may be asked to leave. This is because the Protestant churches are illegal, and the presence of Chinese may draw the wrath of the authorities. What the authorities may particularly fear is proselytizing. It is the duty of Muslims to spread Islam throughout the world, but Muslims generally seem less eager to convert nonbelievers than are Christians. This is partly because Islam is already a part of China, as Christianity is not. As a Muslim middleman told us, "Islam is seen by the Chinese government as part of China, and historically has been part of China. But Christianity is seen by the Chinese government as Western. 'Now, we're going to spread the Gospel to China!' No, that wouldn't happen with Islam here."

We were told that no foreign imam would be allowed in China, except as guests on special occasions such as Ramadan, and that there was indeed government pressure against foreign Islam; in 2007, a prayer room that African Muslims had set up was shut down by Chinese police. Official mosques are indeed allowed, but any foreign-run mosque would eventually be shut down, just like some Christian churches.

Among the Muslims and Christians we know there have sometimes been discussions as to who behaves more morally, Christians or Muslims. Sometimes these discussions devolve into name-calling and stereotypes; but there is a significant doctrinal difference between the two faiths relating to behavior. According to one Muslim trader:

> Are African Muslims more trustworthy than African Christians? Well, not every African Muslim is trustworthy. But with Christianity, the idea of re-

*Other African Muslims insist that, in one trader's words, "some of the Chinese Muslims don't understand Islam well. They don't pray five times a day. A real Muslim will not forget to pray!" They also commented on the differences they saw between Uyghur Muslims, who prayed regularly but who also violated Chinese laws with impunity, and Hui Muslims, who obeyed Chinese laws but were sometimes seen as being less than fully observant of Islamic practices.

> demption is so strong—people can get away with so many things. You steal someone's money today, and then tomorrow you ask for forgiveness. In Islam, the smallest sin you commit, you're accountable for that and should be punished for that. Adultery and cheating are very common among Africans, and still they talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. They may be dealing in drugs, but on Sunday they go to church and talk about how they want to save people. That's what makes Christians immoral. In Islam, you can't do that.

This man told us this at a café where he drank tea and I drank beer. He told me that being with me while I was drinking beer was giving him demerits, since he was accompanying me in sin. He smiled when he said this, but there may have been a grain of seriousness in his words. I asked him why he was talking to me so much if I was going to hell, and he said, "Well, the life hereafter is another story. For now we're still in this world." But in this world, I was causing him minor but irredeemable harm.

There are other, less ultimate features of Islam apparent in Xiaobei. At Eid, Muslims are enjoined to kill sheep to eat and to give to the needy. In some Islamic societies, this is observed more metaphorically than literally, but in the urban, cosmopolitan world of Guangzhou, we saw hundreds of sheep tied to the steel grating next to busy city streets, waiting to be sold, slaughtered in accordance with *halal* specifications, and feasted upon. A Muslim trader told us:

> Every family that can afford it is required to kill a sheep and donate the meat to the poor. In Africa, we slaughter the lambs ourselves; I've done it many times. There's an Islamic way of cutting—the crucial thing is the ritual of proper cutting. It's from the story of Abraham: in Islamic tradition, God wanted to test Abraham's faith, and so he asked him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. When he began to do this, an angel appeared with a lamb, to substitute for Isaac. The mosque has arranged ten buses to shuttle people from the mosque to the slaughterhouse, to avoid slaughtering on the street.

In fact, we saw several sheep slaughtered on the street by the sharp knives of Uyghur, African, and Arab men, beneath the glittering lights of Guangzhou chain stores, while Chinese police and other authorities carefully looked the other way.

Other practices by Muslims that Linessa and I experienced included spending all night with Arab traders during Ramadan, who begin to eat at sunset with the ringing of a bell, ate through the night, prayed at dawn, and then went home to sleep rather than enduring the fast during the summer heat in Guangzhou. We

Figure 18. Sheep on the street at Eid (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

also spent time in the lounges of Arab traders, drinking tea, smoking shisha, and chewing *khat*, a Somali-Yemeni stimulant unavailable in China except in a dried and less-effective form sold by Uyghur vendors (by 2016 it was illegal).[4] Taking it made me feel like a cow chewing its cud but made our interlocutors remarkably garrulous and generous—a little like the effect of several bottles of beer for a few of the more relaxed Christians we spoke with.

We had long and involved political discussions with Muslims—"Why does the West call Muslim criminals terrorists, but when a Christian kills people they don't label that person a terrorist?" was a question that we often discussed and could not answer—but we also had discussions on such matters as multiple wives, a practice allowed to male believers in Islam if they can afford it. The Muslims we spoke with maintained that Christian men were less moral than Muslim men in this respect; in one Muslim man's words, "Christian men have mistresses and keep them hidden, but we Muslims have second and third wives, and they are morally and legally recognized and must be treated properly." He only scoffed at our questions as to whether a wife might have two or three husbands, something hardly imaginable in male-centered Islam. These men maintained that having one wife was best if one could be happy with one; two wives

were most difficult, because the first wife would be jealous when her husband was with his second wife. If he had three or more wives, jealousy would not develop because none of them would know with which other wife he was spending a given night. "To have three wives is the key to having good relationships," we were told. Some of the evangelical Christians we spoke with, on the other hand, would not even acknowledge the existence of women. Linessa complained that in our interviews with a Nigerian Christian, he would only look at me but not at her. When I asked him why, he explained in private that young women were a source of temptation, a distraction from the Lord:

> It's not bad to have a Chinese girlfriend. But it would be bad to have a Chinese girlfriend who's not a born-again Christian. If she really loves you, she will listen to you and believe in Christ. We are afraid of the temptation of fornication. When the Holy Spirit is not with you, you are walking alone—something can happen to you.

He sought to eventually marry a born-again Christian woman back in Nigeria with the blessing of his pastor, but meanwhile women were only a danger, and so he kept his eyes averted. This man was extreme—some other African Christians found no spiritual difficulty in energetically pursuing Chinese women—but his religious faith was front and center in his life, and so his attitude was hardly surprising. As another African Christian trader told us, unequivocally, "Erotic love, unlike divine love, is evil."

A question we asked all the Muslims and Christians we spoke with was whether business contradicted their religious faith: can you be religious and still make a profit? The answer was generally yes, but there was disagreement as to how much one could morally profit. One Nigerian trader said that he could make as much profit as possible, since God had brought him the business—his only responsibility was to pay his tithe:

> Yes, I can be a Christian and make a profit. I bought this bag for 22 RMB and give it to my customer for 24 RMB. If an ignorant guy says, "I want to buy this for 100 RMB," I'd sell it to him. This is business, it's not religion's matter. God watches over me. I pay my tithe at church every week because God gives me the business.

An East African held a different view—he felt that his responsibility, as a Muslim, was to prevent his clients from being cheated. A potential customer

had entered his shop offering him a contract for three thousand pairs of shoes at a high price; he said, "Actually, prices have gone down: I will give it to you 5 percent cheaper. You won't be able to sell these in the market at the price you are naming." The buyer has been his loyal customer ever since; but he said that he had spoken up rather than silently taking a larger profit simply because, as a believer in Islam, this is what was right for him to do.

Another Christian was in the pragmatic middle, between these positions. He showed us an order of shirts sent to him from Nigeria:

> I gave him a nice price, as a Christian, a price that he will accept, so that I can win the order. Could I have gotten the goods made more cheaply and make a bigger profit? You cannot make such money under God. When they give you this T-shirt for 30 RMB, you can sell it to your customer for 34 RMB. You cannot sell it to him for 40 RMB. He needs to make his own profit, too. If he can't make his profit, he won't give you the business. But if your profit is too little, like 2 RMB, when the goods go to Nigeria, he can make 6 RMB.

This trader is a deeply committed Christian who feels that he is under God. He also realizes that he should neither sell either too cheaply or too expensively to his customer, since both he himself and his customer retailing the shirts need to make a reasonable profit. Religious belief is thus a guard against greed, but so too is self-interested business acumen, in thinking for the long term. This was the default position of most traders we spoke with: don't cheat because God is watching, but also because this is the best strategy to enable your business to flourish in the future.

Christian Churches

During our time in Guangzhou, we attended half-a-dozen African churches. There is the Catholic Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, which holds English-language Mass every Sunday. It is a vast place, with two thousand seats and a classical façade, appearing, if one squints, to be a cathedral transported from France. Yang and I in 2011 attended an Igbo Catholic service there and were bowled over by the beauty and spirituality apparent in the Igbo-language hymns. When Linessa and I next attended, three years later, the ministers had become mostly English-speaking Chinese, and parishioners were from all over the world; the service had become impersonal.

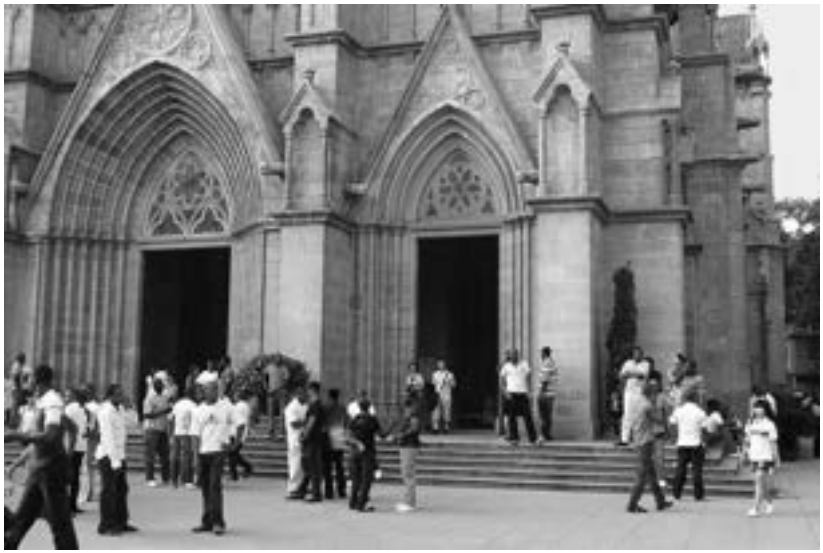

Figure 19. Outside Sacred Heart Cathedral after Mass (photo by Yang Yang)

There are also African Protestant churches such as Royal Victory Church International (whose name we were invited to disclose by its pastor) and a dozen other underground churches, as well as the more upscale and governmentally approved Guangzhou International Christian Fellowship. Many of these churches are presided over by Nigerian ministers who speak in English rather than Igbo in their services; some have parishioners who are primarily Nigerian, but others have parishioners from a range of places, including Kenya and other East African countries. There are also several whose services are primarily in French presided over by Congolese ministers.

Many of these churches frequently move from site to site—because they are underground, they have no lasting structure to meet in but instead relocate whenever their Chinese hosts either ask them to leave or hike up the rental fees. Haugen, in her analysis of African Pentecostal migrants in China, notes that while in Lagos churches are extremely conspicuous, in Guangzhou they are invisible, because they must lie low to avoid notice by authorities.[5] One large church was forced to move from its hotel premises because its service on New Year's Eve 2013 happened to coincide with a police New Year's Eve party at the same hotel. Policemen, surprised by the presence of Africans in the hotel, asked to see the approval letter for this meeting, as was required by law, which of course the

church did not have.[6] The police then informed the hotel that they could not lease the hall to the church thereafter. The church subsequently moved to a hotel on the border between two municipalities in the expectation that police of either municipality would not bother them—which in fact turned out to be the case.

These churches range in size from ten parishioners to three hundred or more on any given Sunday. Chinese, as a rule, don't attend except as guests, and in some churches are actively denied admission, as happened to Linessa except when I accompanied her. Churches such as Royal Victory also have Chinese branches, where she was encouraged to go instead. As an American rather than a Chinese, I was actively welcomed in all foreign churches I went to. This denial of entry to Chinese was not racism but self-protection; we've heard from pastors that one thing Chinese authorities particularly object to is the mingling of Africans and Chinese in church. The Guangzhou International Christian Fellowship specifically says in its program, "In accordance with our license and local government regulations, GICF is open to foreign passport holders only. . . . We must ensure that local citizens are not admitted. Please bring a photo ID that proves foreign citizenship." This explicit regulation reflects the church's governmental approval;[7] other churches that are underground follow this less formally but no less rigorously.

Still other churches don't seem to care much, welcoming anyone who enters. One factor is that Royal Victory Church International has had a long history of direct confrontation with China, whereas more relaxed churches have had no history of confrontation. In a Congolese church Linessa and I attended, mention of China was absent except for, on one occasion, brief joking about Chinese smoking cigarettes, and how it is bad for your health. At Royal Victory, on the other hand, there was direct exhortation to "conquer China for the Gospel" and indeed, Chinese candidates are trained at Royal Victory's ministerial school to do exactly that. Another factor is that at Nigerian churches such as Royal Victory a large proportion of their congregation is overstayers, who are likely to see the Chinese authorities through a prism of antagonism—pastors say in their sermons, "You should love Chinese!" as if to counter this. In the Congolese church, on the other hand, there are apparently few overstayers, and so there may be less need for suspicion of Chinese. At Royal Victory, on any Sunday, police could conceivably barge into the church and close down the service, as they have done in the past.[8]

Last chapter, Antoine spoke of how he looked out for two young women, calling them on Sunday morning to make sure that they could get to church on time and having them sit in the front row. As an important figure in a Congolese

church, he felt this to be his duty, a sense of duty that many churches feel toward their parishioners. At Royal Victory and at other Nigerian churches, there are regular exhortations not to deal drugs, not to engage in Internet scams, not to do the various bad things to which one might fall prey in a foreign country, but to follow the straight and narrow godly path. These churches often have evening meetings and other gatherings as a way to provide a home away from home for their parishioners as well as ongoing moral guidance.

At the same time, money is emphasized as a taken-for-granted good. In a Congolese church one Sunday, the minister asked, "Who wants to earn a great deal of money and be very successful by the end of this year? Stand up and come to the front!" Everyone in the church stood up and came to the front. There are also appeals to support the church and its ministers. At one large church we attended, the request was made by various of the church officials to raise US$600,000 to build a house back in Nigeria for the pastor—a very large amount of money, but a fund that a number of parishioners quickly lined up to contribute to, although there was also a bit of grumbling among parishioners: "That's a lot of money for a house!" At another, smaller church, the pastor spoke more directly: "I need to get a car. . . . I promise I'll use it for five years," he told his congregation. A parishioner at the service said, "It's not appropriate for the pastor to have to ask—the congregation needs to provide a car for him. He's not asking for the car to go and show off—he's using it for the ministry. He's helping people." Many in the church were touched by the pastor's modesty in making such a request, and he did indeed get his car in short order.

The church we attended most regularly over the course of 2013–2014 was Royal Victory Church International.* The Sunday service was long, generally from noon until 4:00 p.m., with an African meal served afterward. The style of worship was also distinctive, with vibrant Nigerian hymns played by an electric band and sung by a choir, with sermons and testimonials by congregants, and with—above all—a style of prayer that was remarkably expressive and individualistic. No one ever stands silently, unless they are a Chinese or foreign visitor. Rather, everyone dances in their own way, and everyone prays in their own way as well, when pastors make space for this in the course of the service as they always do—parishioners shout out their own personal prayers, directly talking

*Pastors Daniel and Helen, senior pastors of Royal Victory Church International, have read over this chapter; we discuss Royal Victory Church and use real names with their permission. An interview with Pastor Daniel and Pastor Helen appears later in this chapter.

with God and Jesus. Each person in the congregation seems to be off in their own expressive world at these times, in a way wholly different from the formulaic Muslim prayers. I sometimes asked congregants in the church whether God answered—whether these were entreaties or conversations. Mostly it was the former, I was told—but the Lord did indeed hear, and would indeed eventually answer, they maintained.

Another major feature of church services was the testimonials of church members. Any parishioner can give a testimonial—I did so at the close of my time in Guangzhou, to thank the church for all its help in my research as well as in my spiritual understanding—and testimonials are a relatively unfiltered glimpse into what is important among congregants. These testimonials generally referred to the difficulties that congregants experienced during their life in China. Yang—who first introduced Linessa and me to Royal Victory—quoted a parishioner's testimonial about how the Bible helped him overcome Chinese incivility:

> I went to a phone shop and wanted to buy mobile phones. The Chinese lady [female shop assistant] was very rude to me. I thought to myself, "Why should I buy phones from you when you are so rude to me?" But later I realized that love could help me get over it. We talked about the father forgiving his sinful son in Luke 15 last week, so I thought again. I finally bought phones from her.[9]

Linessa and I have heard testimonials of all sorts, such as the person who addressed the church alongside his Chinese wife, speaking about how happy he was to obtain, with the help of God, a Chinese residence permit; and the person who spoke of how the Chinese factory owner he bought from once worshipped Buddha but now has turned to Christ. There was also the person who had made a deal with a Chinese company that had given him inferior goods, who, eventually, after many trials and tribulations, got back the 30 percent that he had paid as a deposit due to God's intervention. In their striving and thanks, these testimonials might not have been much out of place in many American evangelical churches. On the other hand, they were also testimonials to the difficult lives that these Nigerians have in living in a foreign land, far from home, at the mercy of their suppliers and immigration officials.

The congregation was generally eighty to a hundred twenty people on Sundays, and was mostly made up of young men in their twenties and thirties, the vast majority of whom were Nigerian Igbos, with smatterings of people from other African countries such as Ghana. There were typically no more than ten or

twenty women at services, most often Nigerian or Kenyan, but sometimes the Chinese wives or girlfriends of Igbo traders; these Chinese were few, except for the two or three occasions per year when Chinese and African congregants were permitted to intermingle. More than other African churches in Guangzhou, the specific purpose of Royal Victory Church is to evangelize China. We once lamented to a Nigerian friend, an active church member, that Nigerians might be diminishing in Guangzhou, and so the church might be in danger. He answered, "As far as the church is concerned, Nigerians are beside the point." The purpose of the church, he said, is missionary; once the church has done its work in planting the seed of the Gospel in China, Nigerians' work is done.

The Royal Victory Church has worked over the years to establish Chinese churches. There are separate branches, Chinese and international (largely African), with Chinese branches in nearby Chinese cities. We went to a service on a day that graduates from the Chinese Ministerial School of the Royal Victory Church were in the congregation, fourteen people in all. Pastor Daniel, the head pastor of the church, seemed extraordinarily happy, because this was the culmination of his vision. A church official told us:

> Pastor Daniel is a hero! This is the first time in the School of Ministry that a Chinese student has been number one: Chinese took the top nine positions! Before, it was always foreigners—from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon. I think that the Chinese churches now are bigger than the Nigerian church! This is the future!

The background of this future is Pastor Daniel's past. As documented in the film *My Father's House*, Pastor Daniel was confronted in his church in 2006 by Chinese police, leading to his expulsion from China for seven years because he refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Chinese government but asserted the supremacy of God instead.[10] One scholar has argued that Chinese antipathy toward Christianity is not so much because China is atheist as because in China, "The state itself assumes a religious aura—a unique promise of delivering utopia . . . and an enduring attempt to encompass other religions."[11] Christians like Pastor Daniel place a higher value on the sovereignty of God and Christ than they do on the sovereignty of the Communist Party and seek to promote this religious view among Chinese. This may be viewed as profoundly dangerous by the Chinese authorities. The Christian churches described earlier express little interest in converting Chinese to Christianity—they minister to their own foreign flock. But Royal Victory is different in its premise.

Because of its stated mission, the Royal Victory Church is concerned with keeping Chinese and Nigerians separate—the desire to proselytize Chinese means that in the actual operation of the church, Chinese and Nigerians must be kept apart for fear of arousing the ire of the government. A church official told us that, in response to being harassed by Chinese authorities, the church itself decided to limit interactions between the Chinese and African congregations. We were told that in secular events in church Chinese can be present, but in the actual church services, Chinese and foreigners are to be kept apart. But the rules are not exactly known or specified. As one long-term church official told us, "China is a place that is very secretive. When they know that you are talking too much about what is happening on the ground, you become an enemy; the government will attack you through its agents." There is an inevitably ambivalent attitude toward the Chinese government, which, on the one hand, has persecuted the church's minister and imprisoned and deported various church members, but on the other hand, enables the church to continue to exist. It may well be that, as some church officials have told us, there are more Christians in China today than there are Communist Party members, and that, indeed, many Communist Party members are Christian. Perhaps so—and yet in official ideology, the two remain obviously opposed.

In 2010, Royal Victory was on the second floor of an auto-parts market. Later, it met in a hotel. When Linessa and I attended for a year, it was meeting on the ninth floor of a nondescript office building not far from Xiaobei. The police may be afraid to directly try to shut the church down—a hundred angry Nigerian men might physically resist them if they tried—but it is pressuring hotels and other sites to not rent to Royal Victory and other African churches. But thus far, anyway, enough venues seek to profit from these churches to make such police efforts futile. A major reason Chinese police might seek to raid churches is that a large proportion of parishioners are overstayers. No one knows exactly how many—we've heard estimates that 50 or 60 percent of parishioners are illegally in China. The pastors are generally not overstayers; all but two or three are part-time ministers who are businesspeople during the week, and they often have long-term legal residence in China. Typically no one knows with certainty who is an overstayer, at least until that person is caught and taken away; one's immigration status is a private matter.

One way that immigration status is confessed is in church testimonials. Occasionally a testimonial will contain the phrase, "God gave me residence." That is the code for being an overstayer, as if to say, "The Chinese state didn't give me

residence; God did." Sometimes this is said forthrightly, but more often with mumbled embarrassment, and yet this is absolutely pivotal to these churchgoers' lives. One overstayer told us after his testimonial to the church, "Most people in the church don't have papers. Papers or no papers, we don't care. Papers are for the government. God gives me papers!"

We often wondered why, if overstayers made up the majority of the church's members, the church stayed quiet about their plight. The reason may be that the church is afraid of Chinese spies in its midst and does not want the presence of overstayers to be stated too directly. This situation became particularly apparent in the months after the Chinese crackdown on overstayers beginning August 2013. We had anticipated that the church would take a strong stance because so many of its members were being caught by the police, imprisoned, and deported, but it did not. The church quietly paid a portion of the fines of parishioners who were caught. According to a church member:

> If you're committed to the church and the police catch you, the church will give you 3,000 RMB, a quarter of the fine; your friends in the church may also give you some money. If you're caught for overstaying, the pastor will announce in church that "so and so was arrested, and we need to support him." But if you're caught for drugs, the pastor will never announce it in church. We know that sometimes members have been caught, but nobody will discuss it.

As for not castigating China for what many have seen as the persecution of Nigerians, a longtime church member maintained:

> This is not the work of the church. The church is here for evangelism. We're missionaries—we can't go ask authorities "why, why, why." We need to present our case to God. The church is not into politics. We don't tell people to go outside and make noise; we just pray. The Chinese government can do anything it wants to do in their country. But we also can do what we want to do for God. Whatever we do, in every situation, we must love Chinese, whatever happens.

A church official, speaking privately, gave us a darker depiction. He said that what China wants to do is eliminate the Nigerians in Guangzhou, because China can make more money through having Chinese in Nigeria. This, he was saying, is why there has been a clampdown on Nigerian overstayers in Guangzhou.

Among members of the church, there no doubt were a few heroin dealers, as well as sex workers and Internet scammers. We asked a long-term member of the church about them, and he said that these people may have been going to church, but they were not born again, or they would not have done what they did. He said that he couldn't tell the difference, but someone who has attained a high level of spiritual discernment could:

> Drug dealers are not bad people, but only weak people—the devil enters into them. It's the devil who makes people bad. Every Sunday, the church announces, "If you are in that business, the church will have no responsibility for it." The church warns them: "Don't do that business!"

Indeed, we heard several times in church sermons that "Anyone engaged in drug dealing or Internet fraud is not really a member of this church. Some people sitting in this room right now are engaged in Internet fraud—you should return the money to those you have defrauded, return double the money!"*

A longtime female trader and churchgoer was more understanding of vice:

> Church is like a hospital, where people with all kinds of issues can come. God has solutions for all problems, so everyone should come, even sex workers and drug dealers. Even if sex workers come looking for customers, they've still had the chance to pray. Of course, if someone is dealing drugs, no one will know. It's not the pastor's business to ask what you do for a living. . . . In church, if you're a sex worker and go to the pastor and say, "I want to make a new life," the church will help you with money. This happened once at the end of last year. People raised money and bought her a container of goods. But no vice is easy to quit.

Because no one knows how the people who come to church actually make their living, abstract criticism but concrete tolerance is the norm—accept everyone

*Nigeria is a source of Internet scams, known in Nigeria as "419s" after the statute of the Nigerian penal code that outlaws such activity. Among such scams are the letters arriving through e-mail saying, "Dear Sir, it has come to my attention, as head of security at the United Nations Bank, that you are the recipient of two million dollars. To collect your money, you will need to . . ." and so on, designed to extract money from naïve and greedy Internet users worldwide.

Figure 20. Nigerian-African wedding at Royal Victory Church International (photo by Linessa Dan Lin)

in the service and try to persuade those engaged in illegal pursuits to follow the straight and narrow.

If crime is a shadow the church seeks to dispel, marriage, not least between African men and Chinese women, is something it joyously celebrates: marriage is one important way of spreading Christianity. We saw a wedding celebration between a Nigerian man and a Chinese woman, with the Chinese woman's extended family in attendance. The mother told Linessa frankly that she didn't want her daughter to marry a black man, but her daughter insisted; the mother said that she believes her daughter's husband more because he is a Christian, and thus is less likely to deceive her daughter. A row of Chinese family members fell asleep during the sermon, and the usher woke them up; no doubt the English-language sermon meant little to them, and they perhaps had never been to church before. But the bride, a Chinese Christian, was radiant at her wedding, as was the groom. Such marriages are perhaps the best hope for African-Chinese relations. Such joy is redoubled with the dedication of babies in the church: the future.

Figure 21. Baby dedication at Royal Victory Church International (photo by Gordon Mathews)

Accounts of Religious Seekers

Hakim

Because there are no African imams practicing their religious callings in Guangzhou, we turn instead to the most religiously aware Muslim trader and agent we spoke with.

> I am a trader and logistics agent from Ethiopia; I am Muslim. I pray five times a day, mostly in my office in Guangzhou. Do I sometimes think about other things when I'm praying? Of course: I'm human—I may suddenly think, "There are a lot of goods waiting to be transported—can we finish loading them on time?" But I immediately go back to prayer. The prayer is the first chapter of the Koran, called "The Opening." Yes, we also pray more personally: my father died recently, and I prayed. But that wasn't inside my formal prayer. I may pray, "May God bless my business." But I would never pray to God to send me more customers. You don't pray for materialistic things. In Islam, you don't do that.
>
> People go to the mosque for an hour in the Friday prayer: the imam will speak in Chinese and then in Arabic about, for example, the importance of prayer five times a day, or of family, or of avoiding *haram* [prohibited] food,

or about current affairs, a disaster somewhere, or terrorism. Yes, in the mosque, Chinese and Africans pray together. Do I feel close to Chinese because I pray with them? Not really, because I'm not going to do any business with those Chinese. It doesn't make much difference to me that the mosque is multicultural.

Allah is watching over me all the time, twenty-four hours a day. He's always there. No, I don't drink. I don't eat pork, I don't do bad things. I only have only one wife—Islam says I can marry up to four, but my wife made me promise when we married that I would have only one. A good thing about Islam is that having a bad thought is not a sin. I look at a beautiful woman and think, "I wish I could have sex with that woman." But I never do it. So it's not a sin, according to Islamic teachings. Yes, when I hear the imam's sermon, I take it seriously—it's a good reminder. In daily life in business, as a Muslim I can make profit. But religion does get in the way of my business sometimes. I was doing money transfer, and I suspected that some of my clients were prostitutes; I told them that I wouldn't transfer money for them. I simply told them that I had stopped doing that business; I didn't want to hurt their feelings.

I've never in my life had doubts about Islam. Some Ethiopians are believers in Islam, others are Christian, and there are atheists too, but I am completely sure of Allah's existence. Why is Islam today often associated with terrorism? There are two reasons. One reason is that Western media is 100 percent biased against Muslims. There is violence everywhere, for religious and racial reasons, but only Muslims are called terrorists. Why? The second reason is that we Muslims have the problem of settling our scores, our anger, through violence. Muslims have to speak against this! They need to take action against terrorism. Islam has nothing to do with violence. People who commit violence say they do it in the name of Islam, but that's a lie—using the name of Islam is 100 percent only an excuse.

There are no African imams in Guangzhou, only the Chinese imam. It's a problem, but most African Muslims respect the local laws. You won't find African Muslims asking Chinese to become Muslims, the way some Christians do. When you become Muslim, there are many conditions you have to fulfill, unlike Christians, for whom, once you say "Christ is my Savior," you will be saved. Muslims don't want somebody who says he's a Muslim but doesn't pray, eats pork, does whatever he wants—for Muslims, you have to ask, "Are you ready to meet all these conditions? If not, then don't become a Muslim." Of course not all Muslims are saints. Many engage in drinking and prostituting, but that's against Islam. In my office, if I find that a Muslim client is

cheating Chinese, I say, "You should be a better Muslim." Some of our clients want to take their goods and disappear. We warn them, "You're going to die some time, and you will have to answer for that!" Anyway, they cheat. But my responsibility is to remind them, to tell them, "As a Muslim, you should not do that."

The Guangzhou mosque—yes, I feel like it's my home when I walk inside. It's a sacred place for me—it doesn't seem foreign. No, I don't know the imam there—I don't even know his name. I pray there on Fridays—the mosque is a little too far from my office to go every day. It's better to pray in a mosque than to pray at home—you get twenty-seven times more credit: this is written in the Sayings of the Prophet. Of course you can't exactly calculate, but you want to do as many good things as possible so that you will go to heaven. I have three children living in the U.S. along with my wife. They're little now, but I'm worried about the temptations they'll face. For the sake of my children's education, I moved my family to the West. That's not a contradiction: you can be a good Muslim and be highly Westernized; you can be a scientist and a Muslim. But the chances of losing faith are higher in the West.

Pastor Daniel and Pastor Helen

The most appropriate representatives of Christianity for this book are undoubtedly pastors Daniel and Helen. Pastor Daniel is the Nigerian founder of Royal Victory International Church, whom we interviewed along with his New-Zealand-born wife, Pastor Helen. Yang, Linessa, and I spoke with them once without recording, and I spoke with them a year later in 2013, recording what they said. This is the only interview where, with their permission, we don't use pseudonyms.

Pastor Daniel came to Hong Kong in the late 1990s, and shortly thereafter went to Guangzhou to start a church, the Royal Victory Church International. It was remarkably successful in its early years; Pastor Daniel said that early on, there wasn't any racism from Chinese, and he would joke around with Chinese officials. However, once the Nigerian community became larger, problems emerged. A Nigerian organization was formed, and its leader was a member of his church; other Nigerians became jealous.[12] Pastor Daniel says that they then went to the Chinese police and denounced him. Underlying this, he said, was the fact that Nigerians were working with the Chinese police in a racket to steal bicycles from Guangzhou streets and send them to Nigeria.

His biggest mistake, he says, was in trying to be involved in Nigerian com-

munity affairs in Guangzhou, which, to his dismay, dissolved into acrimony. But his church also encountered a problem vis-à-vis Chinese religious authorities. First the Nigerian community turned on him, then the Chinese police came to his church during its service. The Chinese police told Pastor Daniel that he must register the church with the authorities, and that he could not mix Africans and Chinese. He refused to recognize this policy—although later the church did indeed separate its Chinese and foreign churches—and he was expelled from China and started a small church in Hong Kong. For seven years he was banned from returning to China, turned back at the border; but he is now able to go back. Pastor Daniel presides over Royal Victory Church services in Guangzhou once a month. He married Pastor Helen in 2011, and since then, she too has become an important figure in the church.

Pastor Daniel: The Chinese authorities now understand God better than they earlier did. They're realizing that Christianity is not the big enemy they thought it was. They were thinking that Christianity was Western propaganda. Now most Chinese are no more anti-God, anti-Christianity.

Pastor Helen: The Chinese attitude has changed. It used to be "One more Christian, one less Chinese." Now it's "One more Christian, one better Chinese." They're starting to see the difference that Christianity can make.

Daniel: I think the Chinese authorities realize that we are helping rather than hurting civic order. Otherwise, they would have closed us down. They realize that "the Royal Victory Church is not against us." We're not involved in governance, we're not involved in policy making, we're comforting people spiritually.

Gordon: Recently have the police interrupted the service in search of overstayers?

Helen: They were in there on a recent Friday; we all stayed home and waited to see that they'd left before we had a meeting that night. No, they haven't come into our Sunday service. As for overstayers, there are so many of them now—the Chinese government is stopping the issuing of visas.

Daniel: Some Nigerians have caused problems, but most problems come from the Chinese side. There was a time when the police in Guangzhou were sponsoring the bad things Nigerians were doing. With heroin now, Chinese are supplying it.

Helen: Because overstayers can't find a job, they're desperate to get money.

Daniel: If they choose to come to the church and be at peace with God, they're less likely to do these bad things.

Gordon: A Muslim I know said that the problem with Christianity is redemption—it enables people to do bad things and then go to church and God forgives them.

Daniel: No, that's not true. Every human being has a problem with their hearts. This isn't Christian or Muslim, it's human—every human has a tendency to sin. But the one thing in Christianity is Jesus, who descended from heaven to show us the real situation of our hearts, and gave forgiveness for our sins.

Helen: If you're born again, you don't want to do bad things because it's like you're nailing Jesus to the cross again and again. The Royal Victory Church is a community, asking for its members' real commitment. Because China is such a foreign place, where they don't have family, we want to have activities where they can feel like family and not get involved in things they shouldn't. We have football teams; it's not just spiritual activities.

Daniel: And they play football very well! We've beaten the Guangzhou police team several times!

Gordon: I've met some Nigerians who say they are Christian prophets, talking to God. How do you know if you're talking to God or not?

Daniel: Prophecy can be dangerous if you have no rule, no order, if you have not been called. Even if God is calling, we encourage people to study, to legitimate it—you cannot be talking like a drunk person, as if you don't know what you're saying. We use the School of Ministry to teach people this.

Helen: We have people in our church who have a gift, they could be prophets, but they need to stay under accountability and training.

Daniel: The main purpose for us here is the Chinese. We had a meeting with the police and the religious bureau. They said they'd give us our church [make the church legal] if we'd agree not to have Chinese in the church. But we didn't agree.

Helen: We envision that Royal Victory's Chinese church will grow far bigger than the international churches in the future—that's really our focus.

Gordon: Would registering mean making the Chinese government superior to God?

Daniel: You got it. And anything that would make us not minister to the Chinese would be against our vision. This will make Chinese better citizens! The Bible was on the list of books that every student should read, put out by the Chinese government four or five years ago. They do research to find out why America has been so successful—they see that it's Christian values.

Helen: Communism is like a religion. And that was their fear, because there are now more Christians than Communists in China. When a few years ago the Falun Gong emerged, that really made them afraid—but I think they're starting to understand us more now: their fear of Christianity is diminishing.

Daniel: The Chinese deport overstayers, but it's near impossible to drive away Africans! They'll still come! And now they're marrying Chinese and having children.

Gordon: So are we going to see a Chinese Barack Obama in the future?

Daniel: My answer is yes. Because this is globalization—Africans, Americans, Europeans, Chinese together—this is the new world. Some people think it will never happen, but it's already here. The Bible prophesized it. Jesus was seeing globally! God said in the Bible that He will bring people from far nations into your nation. That's exactly what's happening. I'm seeing a world that is far, far better than the past. A world in which where you come from doesn't matter. No longer your color or whether you're male or female—rather, your character, your wisdom will be all that matters. If I could give advice, I would tell Xi Jinping or the mayor of Guangzhou, don't be anti-Christian; recognize Christians for what they are, and work with them. Any development without the spirit will collapse like a house of cards.

James

For the final religious portrait of this section, here is the account of a heterodox Christian prophet, experiencing God apart from any established church.

Jesus took me to heaven at the age of four. I wanted to start living in heaven then, but that was not the right time. Three years later, I saw the Lord again, in the form of lights. He said, "Use the name Jesus"; three times I used the name, and the devil was defeated and demons were banished. I continued my normal life in primary school. In 1993, when I was thirteen, I also had a vision. I left my body. I was in a church meeting: a spiritual being gave me a spiritual Bible. I started evangelism, because I had a divine knowledge of the Bible without even looking into the Bible.

In 1998, the Lord appeared and said, "James, come with me." My soul came out of my body, and I was taken to a chamber of souls in a state of torment. These people do not have divine love, and that's why they are in hell.

These people led a normal life, but unfortunately they never knew there is a place that one can go after life. Then I was taken to another chamber, of literal fire. I saw a child of ten years. I asked, "Why are you here?" He said, "I went to church with my parents, but I never obeyed what they told me about Jesus." I saw many people in agony. I did all I could to help, but Jesus said, "It's too late." I've never told church ministers about this.

I was preaching the Gospel in Nigeria. But in 1998, on the twenty-sixth of December, a prophetess said to me, "The Lord is saying, go to China for missionary work: you will save souls in China." I owned a company in Nigeria; I sold it and applied for a visa. The Lord told me I had a mandate to save twenty million souls. At that point my passport had died. I was looking for an immigration officer, but I was told that the Lord would surprise me. If they had captured me, they wouldn't have sent me back, because the word of the Lord wouldn't have been fulfilled.

My mission is to win souls. I have a ministry in Guangyuanxi, where I call on storekeepers. I call each unit I have there the Labor Force of the Holy Ghost. This is what I do every day between the hour of 12:00 and 1:00. This ministry has been able to send clothing to several orphanages in Africa. And we give away Bibles. I minister in Chinese buses every day between 10:00 and 11:00. Often when I give people this sheet about the Christian religion [in English and Chinese], they are so happy. Those who can speak English say something nice. No, I don't speak Chinese. Wouldn't the Lord want me to learn Chinese? Language is not a barrier. Once I give out this tract, the angel has the ability to speak every language.

How do I survive economically? The Lord is my supplier. I receive tithes, the offerings from the Labor Force of the Holy Ghost. A tithe is 10 percent of your profits. I don't accept tithes from people except from the Labor Force of the Holy Ghost. When you look at many ministries, drug dealers will bring tithes, prostitutes will bring tithes, but these are evil. People who are not born again, they do all kinds of things to make their money. It's impossible for a member of the Labor Force to sell drugs. The Labor Force is one who has died to human nature and been born again through the grace of the Lord. I am born again. I do not drink, I do not eat meat. When I need money, the devil may give me an offer. But I say, "Get behind me!" People sometimes offer money, but I decline: They are an agent of the devil. I won't accept it unless they become a member of the Labor Force, giving themselves to the Lord.

Yes, I can heal cancer, I healed cancer in this very building. I healed diabetes, I healed spinal cord injuries. If they acknowledge Christ, the almighty

> healer, I can do this. Christ cannot heal a demon, but He can heal a repentant sinner. My presence carries the healing. Am I an overstayer? I have residence given to me by the Lord. The police broke down the door and said, "Where is your passport?" I said, "I am your passport." I had a Labor Force in prison, and the prison became a church.

Religion: Implications

Of the people portrayed above, Hakim is the only one engaged in business. Pastors Daniel and Helen and James make their livings from their spiritual pursuits, pastors Daniel and Helen from their position within the large church he founded and James from within his heterodox path of persuading followers to give him their tithe. James is an outlier, but he too is part of the panoply of religion among Africans in Guangzhou.

Hakim draws a number of distinctions between Islam and Christianity as practiced in Guangzhou. One difference is that Muslims are less likely to proselytize than Christians—they will not go out to try to convert the Chinese populace. Underlying this is a second key difference: Islam is recognized as a religion in China, as Protestantism, in its African varieties, is not. Thus, believers in Islam are less likely to feel a need for opposition to China and are more likely to obey the law and follow Chinese authorities. This has not been the case for Uyghurs, who may be both fervent Muslims and also flouters of Chinese law, as well as, in a few well-publicized recent events, terrorists (although Hakim might object to this label). But it does seem to be the case for African and Arab Muslims in Guangzhou.

Pastor Daniel and Pastor Helen's church is illegal, and perhaps half its members are overstayers. Pastor Daniel himself was exiled from China for years and has come back only at China's forbearance; but Daniel and Helen have insisted that they will continue to minister to Chinese and seek for Chinese authorities to understand that the Chinese Christians that their church produces will be better Chinese citizens rather than opponents of China. Other Christian ministers we know might have sounded somewhat more like Hakim—although all their churches are illegal, few have built up their identities on the basis of opposition to Chinese authorities. Indeed, this is what makes the words of Daniel and Helen so dangerous and so poignant. Like Hakim, they are profoundly religious, but unlike Hakim, their religion has necessarily put them on an oppositional course with China. They pray for a future when their opposition will no longer be necessary: they dream of a proudly Christian future China.

James they would view as dangerously undisciplined, for he is a prophet without an institutional base—his survival depends upon his ability to persuade some of the Africans he ministers to that he can cure their spiritual and physical ills. Linessa and I were skeptical when we first met James as to whether he himself believed what he was saying, but by the time our interview was over, we were convinced that he was completely sincere, and that he had indeed seen, or imagined he had seen, all the events described in his account. How he could find members of his Labor Force remains unclear—but in a world as uncertain as that of overstayers, the certainty of James in his spiritual conviction must indeed have been convincing to some. With the massive deportations of Nigerians beginning August 2013, James too was apparently taken away and sent back to Nigeria—we cannot find out what has happened to him.

Why are these overstayers, and these traders in general, so religious? One reason is that they have so little practical power over their lives that religious belief may the only response to adversity. Over and over, we heard stories of African traders being cheated, or losing money for various reasons, or being denied visas, and having no recourse to these events. An overstayer in Guangyuanxi can't go to the police. In the end, the only recourse is prayer—no one can intercede but the Lord. And when events do turn out well, this can be seen as the power of the Lord.

This is true for overstayers, but is true in a broader sense as well. We asked a Kenyan trader, Brian, why, when most Europeans and Japanese and Chinese and many Americans as well are not religious, almost every African we met was a deeply religious Muslim or Christian. Brian said, "The developed world is comfortable. Your heaven is here in this world, and so you think you don't need God. But it's a big fallacy to imagine that you don't need God. People have to remember that life is very short—we are not here only." He added, "This is true of China, too."

Traders such as Brian resemble pastors Daniel and Helen and James in believing that they are on a mission. The developed world as a whole, in all its luxury, may be lost to the Word of God, but China remains fertile territory. Brian continued:

> I work primarily as a trader. But the real reason I'm coming to China is a calling from God. China is the last and greatest place where the Gospel will be realized. The Bible predicts that China will become Christian in a time of turmoil, and this is the time today. When you look at the world, in some areas the Gospel has been preached ten times over, a hundred times over, but China has

> a big population that's never heard of Jesus. We know that China has 20 percent of the world's population. It is very obvious except to a fool that China is the next world power. In the Bible, there is a great war known as Armageddon. It says, "The king of the earth will kill two hundred million soldiers." There is no country on earth with two hundred million soldiers, apart from China.

When African traders began coming to Guangzhou, the Chinese government thought that they only came for trade. But at least some traders came for a different reason—they sought to bring Christianity to its last great frontier. It seems unlikely that their efforts will succeed in converting more than a relatively small number of Chinese to Christianity, but who can say? The laws of history are full of unintended consequences, and this may perhaps be one more of them. If the Calvinists of the sixteenth century unwittingly created the Protestant ethic that has come to dominate our world, as Max Weber hypothesized,[13] then just possibly, the African entrepreneurs in south China in the early twenty-first century may serve to create a new Chinese Christian ethic that will dominate the world in centuries to come.

EIGHT

Romance, Love, Marriage, and Families

A Chinese Barack Obama?

"African Chinese"

In 2009, referring to Guangzhou's Xiaobei, scholars argued that "whereas China has always had a limited number of African students and diplomatic personnel who come to study and work . . . never before in Chinese history has any Chinese city seen African migrants in any significant number."[1] If there were indeed many African migrants in Xiaobei, this would be of great significance in potentially shaping the future of China. But almost all the Africans in Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi don't see themselves as migrants, at least not on any permanent basis.[2] Most traders travel in and out of China once or several times a year and regard themselves as Africans sojourning temporarily in China. Overstayers may remain in Guangzhou indefinitely but seek to leave as soon as they have made enough money to go home with their heads held high, if they can avoid getting caught and deported before that time. There are very few Africans in Guangzhou who think of China as their home, the place where they hope to spend the rest of their lives. But there are a few. These people embody the long-term significance of Africans and other foreigners in Guangzhou.

Castillo has maintained that "it is impossible to 'immigrate' to

China in the way immigration is . . . discussed in Western contexts," in that China lacks the legal framework to make this possible.[3] This may be true; but there are Chinese immigration statutes that allow for foreigners to become permanent residents of China.[4] A Chinese immigration official maintained that several Africans have been granted permanent residency in Guangzhou through long-lasting marriage, although we have not met such a person. Linessa in 2014 spoke with two Arab traders who said that they had been granted permanent residency in Guangzhou through investment—a formal business, a bank account, and 1 to 5 million RMB investment in China—even though they were required to renew their permanent residency status every year. This is evidence that it is possible for a foreigner to become a permanent resident of China, but what kind of "permanent residency" requires yearly renewal?

If a front-door legal route to becoming Chinese is theoretically possible, there is also a back-door legal route, as exemplified by Abbas, a Nigerian. A resident of Hong Kong with an HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) passport can obtain a home-return permit to China, in effect becoming legally Chinese.* Most foreigners in Hong Kong retain their home-country passports and are treated as foreigners when they enter mainland China from Hong Kong. But Abbas, as a permanent resident of Hong Kong (as are most foreigners who live there seven years), gave up his Nigerian passport and obtained an HKSAR passport instead, and thus obtained a home-return permit to China. This leads to remarkable scenes in Guangzhou when police stop Abbas and check his passport; they gape and then marvel that although he doesn't look Chinese, and doesn't speak more than a very few words of Chinese, he is indeed legally Chinese. Abbas does not feel particularly Chinese, has no great love for China, and has no intention of living his life in mainland China, but nonetheless, in the eyes of the law, he is indeed (almost) Chinese.

Another way to become "African Chinese" is by immersing oneself in Chinese life and culture. One Central African we know, Cam, jokingly told Linessa that he was more Chinese than she was. In Xiaobei, Cam knows everyone, greeting them all in his perfect Mandarin. The Chinese around him do not identify him as *haaklouh* (黑佬, "black guy"), but call him by the Chinese pronunciation of his name. More than any other African we've known, he is completely at home

*Because of the "one country, two systems" principle at work in Hong Kong, Hong Kong belongs to China but nonetheless retains its own immigration system. Abbas can, in effect, become legally Chinese by being a legal resident of the half-foreign entity of Hong Kong.

in two societies; he has long-term Chinese residence, partly because of China's close relationship to his home country, and has a comfortable relationship with police and government officials. But he had mixed feelings about China, partly because his own romantic relationship with a young Guangzhou woman had ended in failure due to her family's opposition. When we asked him if there could be a Chinese Barack Obama, he said, "No, it's impossible." The reason, he said, is that China keeps those who are ethnically Chinese and those who are not ethnically Chinese apart. Cam brought up that strange locution, *waiguo pengyou* (外国朋友, "foreign friend"), so often used in China to refer to foreigners. The emphasis is on "foreign" more than on "friend," he maintained, with some bitterness—for all his knowledge of and affection for the Chinese world, he feels that he will forever be kept at arm's length.

These are two types of "African Chinese," the legal and the cultural. But a third type, the familial, is most common. These African Chinese are those who have long-term romantic relationships, and sometimes marriage and children, with a Chinese person. This is almost always an African man and a Chinese woman. These relationships involve men from a range of different societies but seem to be most often Nigerian Igbo men and Chinese women who lack Guangzhou *hukou*, Guangzhou household registration, and are from elsewhere in China, often rural villages.[5] Nigerian Igbo men, often overstayers, are likely to have remained in Guangzhou for years on end, unlike many of the traders from other countries or areas, who come and go with the expiration of their visas. Beyond this, Igbos are Christian; Chinese women know that Muslim men may be seeking them to be second or third wives, and may be unwilling to accept that. We examine these relationships in detail in the pages that follow, since they are key to understanding whether or not we may ever see significant numbers of African Chinese in Guangzhou, and whether Guangzhou will become truly multicultural in the future.

The Travails of Chinese-African Romantic Relationships

There are initial bases of unattraction between Chinese and Africans. A Chinese woman told us, "Africans have different skin color than Chinese. They are a different race! How could I be attracted to an African man?" There is also the sense among many Chinese that "Africa is poor and backward. There are many diseases in Africa!" And there is the sense among many Chinese that "Africans smell bad. They don't care about personal hygiene!" There is, in turn, the sense among many African men that Chinese women are impossibly slender: "sleeping with a

Chinese woman is like sleeping with a skeleton," one Nigerian man, accustomed to the ample figures of West African women, told me, as well as similarly unhygienic: "Chinese woman spit everywhere: it's disgusting!"

Some African men misjudge Chinese women from their liberal style of dress. In a Christian Kenyan businessman's words:

> Many Chinese girls are in hotpants—I thought they were all loose ladies. But then I realized that not all Chinese girls who wear hot pants are immoral; some of them are conservative. I was sitting in the metro once and across from me was a girl wearing a short skirt, uncrossing her legs over and over—I thought she was suggesting something to me. If it was in Africa, I might have winked, but now I couldn't wink: she was Chinese! From a Christian context, Jesus said that if you look at a woman lustfully, then you've already committed a sin.

In a Somali Muslim's words:

> Africans are Christian or Muslim, but Chinese don't believe in anything. So a young girl won't feel ashamed of wearing clothing the size of underwear. For Chinese there's no culture leading them not to be immodest. I am Muslim, so I would like ladies' bodies to be covered. But it's their culture.

Despite these testimonies, many African men in Guangzhou are constantly on the prowl for relationships with Chinese women.* Yang has commented about being pursued by suitors in Guangzhou:

> In the markets and night clubs, African traders express their interest in Chinese women by . . . telling them, "You look beautiful. Can you give me your number?" The women will then receive relentless phone calls asking them for a date. . . . Some traders even ask for a woman's bank account number so that they can deposit money . . . which is considered to be a way of showing love. I myself received many eloquent messages and poems from potential suitors. But I found that these love messages were often copied from the Internet, and that

*Same-sex relationships undoubtedly take place, but are, in African and Muslim contexts, sufficiently taboo as to be unspoken about. We have never met any African or Arab man who admits to such relationships, although we have heard such comments as, from a young Pakistani, "I think that some young Pakistani men engage in homosexual relations. But no, of course I would never, ever, ever do such a thing myself!"

> my name often didn't appear in them, meaning that they may have been sent to multiple recipients.[6]

In Guangyuanxi particularly, but also in Xiaobei, flirtatious behavior between male African traders and Chinese female clerks is more the rule than the exception; while on occasion it does lead to romantic relations, often it's a matter of clever business strategy. African traders may be cheated out of thousands of yuan by pretty young Chinese women in skimpy clothing, drawing traders' eyes more to their bodily figures than to the figures offered in the contract. Once the contract is signed, the man may never again encounter the enticing young woman. There are often many such women around; we saw this when Linessa was asked by a Nigerian shopkeeper in Guangyuanxi why she was there: "Do you need an African boyfriend?" She said, "No, I'm married to a Chinese." He replied, "Oh! Well then, good luck with your research." He then went to an adjacent stall, and within ten minutes, a young Chinese woman was massaging his back. Unfortunately, we were never able to talk to this woman to find out what exactly she was seeking.

Flirtation proceeds in the other direction as well. An older West African trader related:

> I went into a clothing shop run by a father and daughter. An African trader was joking with the daughter, touching her, saying, "You're beautiful!" and the father kept calm. I felt so uncomfortable. This was his daughter, and he kept on smiling. He probably was fuming inside, but he could see a big customer choosing dozens of suits; he had to bite his tongue just for the sale.

These flirtations are often no more than business stratagems or matters of play. But once relationships form, they are, in a Chinese context, not typically one-night stands or casual flings. As a Chinese clerk told us:

> No, I would never go out with an African customer—never. Well, one time I did, because I've known him a long time; he's my friend, so I didn't worry. Yes, he wanted me to be his girlfriend. But I told him that I already had a boyfriend. I already have a Chinese boyfriend; but even if I didn't, that's what I would have told him.

Her assumption, one held by most Chinese women, is that one can have only one relationship at a time, and that a relationship is serious, at least potentially

leading to marriage (and of course her apparent assumption about the unsuitability of a relationship with any African is also telling). From the Chinese woman's side, the biggest worry may be what parents and relatives may think. One Chinese shopkeeper with a Nigerian boyfriend told Yang:

> I showed my mother a picture of my boyfriend on my cellphone and only introduced him as my buddy. She didn't say anything, but the next day she . . . hid my passport and *hukou* registration booklet so that I wouldn't be able to register the marriage or run away to Africa with him. Then I finally knew she was deeply against my association with an African man.[7]

This attitude was corroborated by many Africans we spoke with. A Kenyan entrepreneur told us, "I have had a Chinese girlfriend. Hanging out with her, you feel negative energy—Chinese people aren't happy about this." Chinese men may feel particular disdain toward Chinese-African relationships, since they themselves may feel spurned. As a Chinese merchant told us, with remarkable frankness:

> Most Chinese ladies married to African men are ugly. I think it may be better for them to marry Africans because it would be impossible for them to find good-looking Chinese men. If they marry Africans, they may be treated like princesses. But I also know there are some good-looking Chinese ladies with African men. I don't understand them at all. Why do they do this? I feel sorry for them.

A female Chinese shopkeeper added to this, speaking of Chinese racial discrimination:

> Young Chinese ladies in their twenties easily get cheated by men, but not all of them are cheated; some of them are well-educated university students. Why do they want an African husband? First, African men's body shapes are attractive; second, African men are sweet. Chinese men are shy and boring. Yes, if a Chinese marries a white person, other Chinese will envy you, but if you marry an African, other Chinese will discriminate against you.

African and Arab men had a different set of concerns: the reputation of Chinese women is that they are primarily interested in money, and that they are more controlling than women from traders' home countries. A trader from Bahrain told us:

> When you marry a Chinese, she becomes the man and you become the woman. My friends have warned me that if you marry a Chinese girl, she will watch you wherever you go and whatever you spend money on. She will make your life her life. She will manage everything. You can no longer do what you want—you do what she wants.

A Nigerian told us that he had been warned about Chinese women through his cousin's marriage: "His Chinese wife is always giving orders to him, making him do this and do that, which an African woman will never do to her husband." From a Western perspective, these Chinese women may simply have more equal relationships with their husbands than is the case in many African and Middle Eastern societies; but from the perspective of these traders, this makes these women less attractive as marriage partners.

We've heard from both Africans and Chinese that women with Guangzhou *hukou* have little interest in marrying Africans, because their economic prospects and social status would be dragged down by such relationships. On the other hand, for a woman without a city *hukou*, who is ineligible for welfare and other benefits, such a relationship may lift her life prospects, even if her boyfriend or husband is an overstayer. If the African is legally in Guangzhou, then this can lead to a registered marriage. If the African is not legally in Guangzhou, then while a religious celebration of the wedding can be held, the marriage will not be recognized by Chinese authorities and will be of absolutely no help in enabling the overstayer to remain in China. And yet the relationship may be pragmatically beneficial for both the man and the woman. If they engage in business together, he can provide the African connections, while she can provide the Chinese connections.

A female African trader expressed her skepticism about many such relationships:

> It's rare for a marriage between Chinese and Africans to be about love. Rather, everybody wants something. Maybe the man wants papers to stay in China, even though it doesn't help much to be married. And Chinese—the Chinese woman is looking for money, so that they can get an apartment. The marriage on both sides is a kind of benefit: "What can I get out of this?" Some men have married Chinese girls from wealthy families, and now they're running their father's factories. Chinese married to Africans are smarter than most Chinese women. Every time you mix with people who are not your own kind, you learn from them. But I always find that African men, in the back of their minds, they don't get totally committed. You find one married to a Chinese—

> the women are working their butts off to do all the things for the man, but the guy is all over the place; he might even have an African wife.

Of course love and pragmatism need not be opposed; the two often become intertwined.[8] Still, if business is the motivation for marriage for many African men, their hearts may wander elsewhere. There are numerous cautionary tales among Chinese in Guangzhou about the dangers of having a long-term relationship with an African. Yang in 2010 explored how, without support from family or friends, some Chinese women who have partnered with Nigerian men formed their own social support group, an online group called "African beauties" (非洲丽人群, *fēizhōu lìrén qún*).* Members of this group organized social gatherings where they shared stories about their lives with their African spouses and offered counseling to one another. One story that emerged concerned a girl who in August 2010 asked how to find her missing husband. He had gone back to Nigeria after she gave birth to their child a year earlier. At first, she thought that he would come back to China as soon as he received the money he was owed in Lagos. But when she tried to call him, she found that the number she had been given was no longer in use. This is a common cautionary story. As one member wrote, "I am so immune to this kind of sad story that I lack the ability to sympathize."[9]

The Chinese women in the group told each other to be aware of several things about their potential African spouses in order to avoid "relationship fraud." First, a Chinese female partner needs to reach out to the trader's social networks to find out his real identity. She should also check if the man has another wife back home. Second, it is crucial to find out the man's economic capacity. As one disappointed spouse commented to Yang:

> When we got married, my husband only paid several thousand yuan as bride price† and I felt I was losing a lot of face. My parents said, "Although we're not selling our daughter, this is still ridiculously cheap." My husband and I worked

*This group was on QQ, which in 2010 was the most popular online social site in China. The "African Beauties" QQ group was exclusive and could not be accessed by the public.

†Marriages in Guangzhou typically involve the payment of bride price from the groom to the parents of the bride before marriage. Generally, in Guangzhou, the husband pays a bride price of 10,000–50,000 RMB, but Africans are typically asked to pay more than their Chinese counterparts. Chinese parents may ask the Nigerian man for a bride price of 100,000 RMB, but it may be bargained it down to 40,000 RMB or less.

> hard in business together to save a small amount of money. I used to dream he'd buy us an apartment in Guangzhou, but then I found that most of the pennies we saved were used to support his extended family back in Nigeria. Even if he had the money here, he would rather invest the money in business than buy an apartment.[10]

Chinese-African marriages do not follow the conventional principle of hypergamy: women "marrying up," widely acknowledged as the standard pattern of marriage throughout much of the world. In Korea, a typical pattern of marriage with foreigners has been for rural working-class Korean men to marry women from China, Vietnam, the Philippines, or Indonesia; the former often cannot find suitable Korean spouses, and the latter marry spouses in a society with a considerably higher standard of living than their own.[11] Because China is a wealthier society than Nigeria or Kenya, it would make sense, by this model, for African women to be marrying Chinese men. But this almost never happens. Why?

Most obviously, while China is wealthier than most sub-Saharan African countries, people do not marry a country but an individual, and in many cases Chinese marry Africans from wealthy families (or at least Africans who claim they are from wealthy families). Those Chinese women who marry African men, and particularly those who do not have city *hukou*, may indeed see marrying these Africans as hypergamy, given the restrictions they themselves face. African women in Guangzhou are typically short-term traders who may not be in China long enough to form long-term relationships, or sex workers who may indeed be patronized by Chinese men but who are unlikely to be married to them. This is a major reason most romantic relationships are between African men and Chinese women. Finally, as already alluded to, many African men have a gift of verbal charm that Chinese men typically lack; many of the young Chinese women working in areas of Guangzhou frequented by Africans may find themselves susceptible to the charms of one or more of their African customers, resulting, in more than a few cases, in marriage and children.

If an African marries a Chinese through an officially recognized marriage, he will qualify for permanent residency on the condition that he stays in China for five years after the marriage, and stay at least nine months each year according to Chinese immigration law.[12] However, none of the African-Chinese couples we know have achieved that, and Africans we know are skeptical about the possibility of obtaining long-term residence through marriage. A Ghanaian said to us indignantly, "A Chinese marrying a Ghanaian has the option of becoming a Ghanaian citizen and getting a Ghanaian passport after two to five years. But

you could be married to a Chinese citizen for over fifty years, and it's not going to happen." A French citizen said, "Marriage to a Chinese won't help—I've seen numbers of Europeans at the immigration office who are in there crying, because despite their marriage to Chinese, their visa has been revoked or not extended. It means nothing to be married to a Chinese if you want to stay in China." Lan writes that "unlike in many western countries, marriage to a Chinese citizen does not lead to permanent residency."[13] To which we may add that theoretically it might, but as of this writing it only very rarely does.

Children

Many Chinese women we spoke with said that the major obstacle to a marriage with an African man was the fate of the children that might result. One young Chinese woman said, "I can't marry an African man. I'm afraid that if I had a child with him, the child might be discriminated against. Chinese children won't like a child who is half-Chinese, half-African." Among "mixed race" offspring in China, many popular Chinese models and film stars are Eurasian. But this popular approval does not extend to African-Asians. There have been many Chinese news reports on Lou Jing, a woman with a Chinese mother and an African American father, who went on a TV singing contest and thereafter suffered from widespread racial abuse online.[14] Yang reported in 2010 on her Chinese friend Mary, who was proposed to by her Nigerian boyfriend and hesitated. Mary said, "I don't want my future children to have a complicated life like Lou Jing."[15] Mary eventually decided to break up with him.

In the years since Yang's research, Linessa and I heard similar accounts but also encountered a different situation: not Chinese women avoiding relations with African men because they are afraid of their future child's eventual fate, but Chinese women cementing their relations with African men by getting pregnant. This strategy was used by some Chinese women with African boyfriends in order to get their parents to accept their marriage. Some parents feel shame anticipating a mixed-race child, but once their daughter gives birth to a baby, they may accept it, since "they can do nothing now."

If an observer walks casually around Xiaobei, or particularly Guangyuanxi, babies and small children of mixed race are easy to spot, even after the police crackdown of 2013–2014. As a Nigerian trader said, "There are several hundred Chinese African babies in Guangyuanxi. Give China twenty years, and you will see many mixed-color kids. I know one Chinese teacher who wants to marry an

African, because she believes these mixed kid can speak more languages and are smarter." As a Kenyan trader said:

> Yes, when I see a mixed African Chinese baby in Guangzhou, the kids are so adorable. They don't look Chinese, they don't look African—very handsome kids. In our church, there are so many. I don't think that China is only for Chinese anymore. This new breed of human beings is coming. It will become like America. China now is opening to the world. They will begin to really accept foreigners!

A Yemeni trader said, "My advice to Chinese would be to marry foreigners—make babies between Chinese and different nationalities. We need mixed babies. Everywhere, people will become more beautiful in the world! When people are from outside, everyone becomes more beautiful!" A West African married to a Chinese for several years said:

> Guangzhou is becoming a multicultural society, slowly but surely. But the laws have to change; people are changing faster than the government is. There are a lot of foreigners coming in—Guangzhou is different from other cities in China. My wife said that if her mother were alive, my relationship with her would never have happened; her mother was anti-foreigner, and wanted her daughter to marry a Chinese. But the world is changing; people are inter-breeding.

As a Kenyan trader told us, "China now is like the U.S. sixty years ago. It might not take one generation but two—not my own children, but my grandchildren who might be free of discrimination in China."

These commentators link mixed-race children to beauty and talent that exceeds that of Chinese and Africans alone and also envision a newly emergent China that will no longer be characterized by racism. But given ongoing senses that "China is for Chinese," it seems that this may be wishful thinking; many we spoke with reject this view. A Chinese man who runs a stall in a Nigerian mall said:

> I don't like it when I see Chinese girls with African boyfriends. I am a traditional Chinese. I want to see Chinese people; I don't want to see mixed blood people. Maybe after ten or twenty years, Guangzhou will become a black city,

> which I can't imagine. Africans are not well educated. Europeans are better because they are from developed countries.

Another Chinese shopkeeper echoed the view that Chinese discrimination might remain but emphasized that it was not a matter of color but of Chinese versus non-Chinese:

> Africans have an important role in China. Many Chinese women have married Africans. Their next generation will speak Chinese, African languages, and English. But no, I would never let my daughter marry an African. It's not prejudice against Africans. It's that the lifestyles of Africans and Chinese are so different. I won't allow my daughter to marry a white guy either. It's not about color. I know there are many African kids born in China who behave like Chinese. But they're not Chinese.

The reluctance to accept intermarriage with foreigners was not only from the Chinese side. A Somali trader said, "Children who are half Chinese, half African—I don't support this. It should be black for black, yellow for yellow, white for white, when it comes to marriage. It's because of the culture—people should stick to their own culture. When it comes to business, they can mix, but not marriage."

We asked virtually everyone we met, "Do you think there will someday be a Chinese Barack Obama?" A Nigerian answered, "Of course! One day. . . . I believe that in the years to come, the African-Chinese babies here, they may enter into the governance of this country. There is some racism from Chinese, but there isn't a big problem of racism." I asked a Chinese Communist Party official and received a more pointed answer, in full cognizance of how Chinese gender-based political power structures actually work: "Yes, I believe that there can be a Chinese Barack Obama. But this will happen only if a top Communist Party official has an African mistress and has a son with her." He later added, "But even if a top official has a child with an African woman, you wouldn't have a Chinese Barack Obama, because Chinese people would not support this. They don't have open minds, like American people. China is not racially mixed. . . . It would be more likely if the son were half British or half French."

The Chinese African children whom we saw were preschool age, and indeed, these relationships are typically new enough so that we don't yet know what may happen once these children reach school age and beyond. There are at least some

older children of Chinese-African relationships formed in earlier years, but we were only very rarely able to meet such children or their parents. One key issue is where children will wind up living. Most Nigerian men we know seek for their children to grow up in Nigeria; most Chinese women seek for their children to grow up in China. China does not allow dual citizenship—if the child grows up in China, he or she will be Chinese, but if the child grows up in Nigeria, he or she will be Nigerian. If the child is born in China, it is required that the child register with a *hukou*, following her Chinese mother, in order to apply for a Chinese passport. If the father does not want his child to be Chinese, and refuses to register for a Chinese *hukou*, his child will be stuck in China because she cannot apply for a passport. So if the parents want their child to be African, they must bear her in Africa. However, some we spoke with maintained that with the under-the-table payment of enough money in Nigeria, the problem can be solved—even though the child has been registered in China, she can have a Nigerian passport in Africa bought for her.

The children we saw and marveled at were not only African Chinese, but also those born of two African parents, who were becoming culturally Chinese. For example, we met a four-year-old Nigerian girl, the daughter of a shop owner and his wife in Guangyuanxi, who was born in Guangzhou and speaks Chinese and English but not Igbo. She speaks Chinese because she has Chinese friends in her kindergarten. We met a Congolese boy studying at a Chinese primary school with two other African children; he speaks Chinese as if he were a native speaker of the language.

On the other hand, some couples we know refused to raise their children in China. Yang knew a Nigerian man and his Chinese wife who in 2010 decided to have their child in Hong Kong. As he told her, "It will be expensive using private hospitals there, but I want our child to be born as a Hong Kong citizen and grow up in a nonracist environment. My child will not be struggling as I am now." He deeply felt that having his child born in Hong Kong was a way to break out of his life in Guangzhou, even though, because he was an overstayer, he could neither be legally recognized as the child's father nor travel to Hong Kong himself.[16] Linessa and I know a West African logistics agent married to a Chinese woman with relatives in Hong Kong; they arranged to have their children educated in Hong Kong. This is their strategy to have the children learn English so that they can communicate with their father—or, as their father told me, to avoid having their children become "overly Chinese." China, for all its growing wealth, does not seem to at least some of the African-Chinese couples we know to be a good

place in which to bear and educate one's children. But for most such couples we know, this was not an option—the child will grow up in either China or Nigeria, or both places, but not elsewhere.

Accounts of Marriages

Kent

Kent is a Nigerian overstayer with whom we regularly spoke about business. I joked with him about his Chinese secretary, Clara, saying that he should learn Chinese from her and marry her; eventually we realized that she was indeed more than his secretary. He was always extremely reticent about their relationship, but Clara told us more over the months, especially because during the police crackdown of 2013–2014 Kent stayed away from their shop and Clara took over as the face of the business.

> Yes, Clara is my girlfriend. She's learning English from me but I'm not learning much Chinese from her. If love permits, we'll marry; now we're in courtship. She's my first Chinese girlfriend. No, there's no possibility of getting permanent residence in China if I marry her. It's hard for Nigerian passport holders, especially overstayers. If I married Clara, I'd still have to go back to Nigeria to get documents. I'd have to pay the penalties. If you're caught and pay the penalties, it's five years before you can come back. If you're not caught, it's only three years and informally you can come back.
>
> Have I met Clara's parents? This is a very personal question! [laughs] . . . Older Chinese men and women, parents, still have this mentality they were brought up with. But life has gone beyond that in a country like this. Sometimes now, a foreigner and an indigene fall in love and get married. That's civilization. But an older Chinese parent who can't speak English wants you to bring an in-law who can speak Chinese, who can understand the culture of the country. When there's no full communication, there's no way you can flow together; there's a gap. It's just the language difference. . . . Yes, if the situation warrants, I'll meet her parents. Many Chinese parents don't want their daughters to marry foreigners, especially Africans. But hybrid kids are wonderful, intelligent, good-looking, strong, when they have this Chinese-African mix. In Guangzhou and Shenzhen now, it's common to have foreign spouses. But in remote areas, they'll still look at you as someone who has come from the sky.

Clara

Because Clara spoke only limited English, Linessa interviewed her in Cantonese.

> Kent and I can't officially get married because he doesn't have a valid passport and visa. I want to visit Nigeria, but he'll have to apply for deportation to go back to Nigeria, and he might not manage to get a new visa to come to China again. He says he'd rather stay in China than Africa for the rest of his life, but I don't know if he's serious. His family in Nigeria is wealthy: they have fancy cars, and have sent all their ten children to university. No, I've never thought of taking him home to meet my parents during Chinese New Year, not because he's African but because we're not yet formally engaged, and so I'm not ready. I don't want my parents to worry about me. Chinese parents aren't happy if their daughters marry far away. I don't want to talk about my parents! I'm thirty-three years old. I got to know Kent a year ago via the Internet.
>
> Kent can't go to the shop these days because of the police, and so I go and deal with business; but he can still travel around China for sourcing, since no one will check his ID. I worry, but I've gotten used to it. . . . Yes, we're beginning to think about having children. I want my children to be Chinese, because the Chinese government is better than the Nigerian one. I'd like to stay in China in the future: that's my plan! I don't want to go to Africa to live, I can't imagine that. But who knows what will happen? Many Chinese women go to Africa because their African husbands can't get residency in China, since they're overstayers. But I have a grandmother in my hometown who is bedridden, and an uncle who raised me; I'll need to take care of him when he gets old. In Nigeria, families are big, so it's easier to take care of parents, but not in China. Eighty percent of the Chinese women I talk to who are married to Africans regret it now, because of their children's situation. The children can't be both African and Chinese: they have to choose.

Denise

An interview with Denise, a young Chinese woman with a Nigerian husband, was conducted by Linessa in Cantonese over several encounters in a store in Guangyuanxi, while her son slept or played by his mother's side.

> Billy, my husband, and I have a sixteen-month-old son. I'm going back to my hometown in China with my son during Chinese New Year, and Billy's go-

ing back to Nigeria. We're legally married, and he has proper visas status in China—he's going back to Nigeria to apply for another visa. Billy used to have a three-month-visa or six-month-visa, but this time he can get a one-year-visa, probably because of our registered marriage. Most couples in Guangyuanxi aren't legally married and don't have the marriage certificate; we're lucky. My mother says that it's not a good idea to take the baby to Nigeria yet because he's so young, so this time Billy and I will be separate.

Billy came to China in 2007, and we've been together since 2009. I had a shop selling accessories, and Billy always came to my shop to buy things. That was how we met. Now, we work together. Billy goes to factories to check goods; I stay in the office and help contact factories, but I'm planning to open my own shop because Billy doesn't need my help much. We wanted to get married earlier, but my parents disagreed. My family has accepted Billy because they had to; we didn't get married until I was pregnant. My parents worried that I might be deceived by a black man. I told them that they shouldn't worry just because he's black; if I married a Chinese, he might also treat me badly. My parents accepted Billy at the end, but that hasn't been true for most of my friends who have relationship with Africans. It's common to see Chinese girls break off their relationships with their parents to marry Africans. A friend of mine gave birth to a girl with her African boyfriend, and her parents refused to meet her again. Her boyfriend went back to Nigeria during her pregnancy and hasn't come back. Now the daughter is three years old, but has never met her father.

I went back to Nigeria with Billy two years ago. I liked the people in Billy's home village, but I couldn't stand Nigerian food. I cried because I was so hungry. We registered our marriage in Nigeria because that way I could check whether or not I'm my husband's first wife—my friends reminded me that I'd better check Billy's marital status. It's really expensive to do this—the registration fee is equivalent to 4,000 RMB in Nigeria while it only costs 9 RMB to register in China. But it was worth it. For my husband, he can get a yearlong visa now, but it's become harder and harder to apply for a visa. Many Africans who go back to Africa to apply for new visas have been refused and can't come back to China. My son has a *hukou* from my hometown. But I want to bring him up in Guangzhou—I hope that we'll be able to afford to send him to send him to school in Guangzhou; the schools are better here. I want my son to speak Mandarin Chinese as his first language, but also Igbo and English. I don't want him to go to schools in Nigeria when he's young; but when he grows up,

he can choose for himself where to live. I plan to have two babies, because Africans think it's unimaginable to have only one child.

Why do some couples get legally married and others don't? Well, the wife's family has to accept the relationship, since the wife's parents need to give the *hukou* registration book to their children; if you're my father and don't give me the book, I can't get married. Marriage gives advantages to Africans like my husband who seek visas, so it's really important. But it's not just Chinese families that object to these marriages—young Chinese women themselves don't want to register their marriages until late, so that they can break up any time if they want to. I'm really lucky that my marriage is so happy and stable.

William

To balance our portrayals, we have William, a Nigerian Igbo man who refuses to marry a Chinese woman.

I've been in China eight years. I don't have a girlfriend, I don't have a marriage. No, no, I wouldn't marry a Chinese girl! You can't get papers; you can't get residence rights when you marry—and when you marry her you have to feed her, feed the family, take responsibility! If you marry a Chinese here, the Chinese government won't cover you. You'll just fill the girl and her family with suffering. I've seen a lot of divorces between Nigerians and Chinese.

Marriage doesn't necessarily help you. My friend married a Chinese woman and had a son with her, and they only gave him a three-month visa. A married man with a Chinese child, why do you give him only three months? But sometimes when you marry them, it helps with your business. The Chinese girls help Africans to do business and Africans help them to succeed. They are poor girls, but they have the contacts from the factories. So when a foreigner enters, they can send the sample and market in Africa; they can make money. Yes, they help us and we help them too.

Why not a Chinese girl for me? I don't like them. They like money and that's number one for them. Many have not traveled outside China. I don't want to stay in China, and they don't want to leave China. I like China, but only for business. . . . You need to watch them a lot before you can get married. And you need to teach them the truth concerning Jesus, about the nice wife they need to be. Otherwise, she'll betray you—you go to Nigeria and then come back, and find that another man has taken over. Also, some African

men are stupid; they begin to play around. They think they know more than the Chinese girl. You need to have a plan for a business marriage—it will work for some people but not for others. You need someone who has a heart.

Yes, I'm happy when I see a child who is half black, half Chinese. In the whole world, that is how it's supposed to be! There are some marriages between Africans and Chinese that are good. But there's a lot of pressure from a Chinese girl, and a lot of things you need to be aware of before you can stay with them. Do you know about vampires? They can be a spiritual vampire, disturbing you, sucking your blood and giving you suffering. Yes, I have to marry a Christian. As a born-again Christian, you marry Jesus for life. There's racism that parents teach their children: in a school five Chinese kids will beat up one black kid or mixed kids. But maybe the situation is getting better—that's what I've heard. Maybe there really will be a Chinese Barack Obama someday.

* * *

These accounts include Kent and Clara, a Nigerian man and his girlfriend beginning to think seriously about their future together; Denise, a Chinese woman in a happy marriage with a Nigerian man; and William, a Nigerian man who refuses to seek a Chinese wife. These men are all Nigerian Igbos (it is largely Nigerians who marry Chinese), but it's been difficult to find Nigerian Igbo men willing to talk personally about their marriages. Whether this is because of the particular men we know well or because of a general reticence on the part of Igbo men to talk about such matters, we don't know. Fortunately, their Chinese girlfriends or wives are less reticent, particularly when speaking to Linessa.

Kent is an overstayer, which means that he and Clara cannot possibly become legally married until he surrenders himself to authorities and returns to Nigeria for years. Their relationship is serious—they're living together—but he has yet to meet her parents. Clara discusses children with Linessa, but where will their children live and who will they be, Chinese or African? She tells us that she can't imagine living in Africa, and she has older family she must care for in China; Kent says that he wouldn't mind living in China, but she doesn't know how to read this. She tells us that 80 percent of the Chinese women she talks to who are married to Nigerians feel regret, and she is endeavoring not to become one of them.

Denise portrays her marriage with Billy in a positive light—the marriage seems to be working, although we don't hear from Billy—but she has taken precautions to help ensure such happiness, not only talking intensively with other

Chinese women married to Nigerians but also going to Nigeria and checking to see whether or not Billy has another wife, as well as staying in his home village. Because Billy is legally in China and their marriage is officially recognized, Denise and Billy can work together without having to dodge the police, as must Clara and Kent; unlike Clara and Kent, she can tell her parents about the relationship, although they accepted it only after she became pregnant. As for their children, Denise seeks for them to be educated in China, at least initially, until they can make up their own minds. This seems to be a Chinese-Nigerian family that is happy and successful.

William has foresworn any Chinese girlfriends or wives. He knows that many such marriages don't work out and also that they will give him no legal advantage in enabling him to stay in China. Chinese women are too concerned with money, he tells us, and also seek to live only in China; beyond this, he is concerned that any Chinese woman who is not God-fearing might be a "spiritual vampire." But he closes his account by agreeing that there just might emerge a Chinese Barack Obama in the future; he too is a cross-cultural optimist, at least in theory.

From all we've seen in these accounts, and indeed, in all the preceding pages, happy and stable marriages between Nigerian men and Chinese women are possible but unlikely. Aside from the inherent difficulty of any cross-cultural relationships and the added difficulties of Chinese prejudice and Nigerian fecklessness, the institutional barriers against such relationships, particularly if the man is an overstayer, seem all but insurmountable. And yet, against this bleak backdrop, happy relationships exist and African Chinese babies are born; and who knows what ultimately may come of that?

Conclusion: The Larger Significance of Africans in China

I began this book by asking how low-end globalization works in Guangzhou between Africans and other foreigners and Chinese, and whether Guangzhou, over the past sixty years largely monoethnic and monocultural, might be in the process of becoming multicultural. This book's chapters have sought to explicate these questions in detail, but now, in the final few pages, let me look once again at their larger implications. What is the ultimate significance of the low-end globalization described in this book's chapters as practiced between Chinese suppliers and African traders? And is Guangzhou indeed becoming multicultural, as the possible forebear of a new China?

This book has been full of criticism and tension between Africans and Chi-

nese: "The Chinese cheat!" "Chinese don't think about friendship but only about money!" "The Chinese believe not in God but in gold!" many Africans say. In turn, some Chinese may rue the Africans in their midst. But despite the tension between the two groups, there is a larger fact that cannot be forgotten: China's pivotal role in making goods that the developing world can afford. I predict that when economic textbooks are written a century hence, the knockoffs and copies manufactured in China will be seen as China's major global contribution of the early twenty-first century. This is because they bring globalization not simply to the wealthy countries of the world but to Africa and to all the developing world, the 70–80 percent of the world's population that does not belong to the exclusive club of the rich. No other country has done this—not the United States, not Korea, not the U.K. or France or Japan. It is China, through its cornucopia of cheap knockoff and copy goods, that is bringing the goods of globalization to all the world.

This is facilitated by the African traders and middlemen whose livelihoods and lives we have examined. Their role has been to serve as a vital middle link between China, the world's low-end manufacturing hub, and Africa, a continent desirous of the flood of Chinese goods that these traders and middlemen abet and make a profit from.

Much has been written about Africa-China relations in terms of whether China is plundering Africa's raw materials and whether China is in effect colonizing Africa.[17] I haven't addressed these issues in the preceding pages, but they did indeed come up from time to time in conversations with traders. As the Senegalese logistics agent Albert said in chapter 6, "The Chinese are coming in, taking the raw materials—in the olden days it was the Europeans and Americans, but now it's the Chinese stripping the place dry." This may indeed be the case, but according to many of the African traders and merchants we spoke with, there are appreciable differences between China and the United States in their approaches to Africa. A Somali trader said to us, "Is China the new colonizer of Africa? Not necessarily. You know, China gives things without conditions. They just do business. The U.S. will talk about democracy, human rights, a lot of nonsense. China is just business: you scratch my back, I scratch yours." Indeed, while many depictions in American and European mass media warn about China taking over Africa, most of the African traders and middlemen we know waxed positive about China's role in Africa because of what they saw as the lack of hypocritical American and European ideals, whether in terms of human rights or of intellectual property.[18]

Most important, in their view, were the knockoff and copy goods coming

from China—something not much discussed as a positive benefit to Africa in the academic and popular literature but essential to the people we spoke with. We cannot ultimately know how well these goods as a whole work for African customers, the extent to which they are effective or are garbage. Clearly, just as there are some Chinese merchants who cheat African traders at every opportunity, so too there are some African traders who send junk home that they sell at the highest possible prices, deceiving and exploiting customers. But it seems from all we have heard that just as most Chinese merchants don't cheat African traders, most African traders don't cheat African consumers. This is not because of law, which is minimally functional in this trade, nor because of morality, but because of the self-interest needed to keep one's reputation unsullied for the sake of business. Most of the knockoffs and copies made in China and sent to Africa seem functional and effective, albeit only for a while. A Kenyan entrepreneur not connected to the import of Chinese goods told me this in a Nairobi coffeehouse:

> Most of the goods you see in the markets in Africa are counterfeits, copied goods from China. Because of our economy, not many people here can afford to buy the genuine stuff. But with the copied stuff from China, everyone is assured of owning a TV, a mobile phone, a motorbike. That only comes through China. Everything that we have is a copy from China except for sunlight! Yes, the copies work; they are very useful; they play a big part of our lives, even though they're not durable. The price is less than 50 percent of the original models. You can get any goods you want in Kenya from China! Africans must be very appreciative that China is doing this. Because otherwise that presence of luxury would have been impossible; the price would have been too high. Africans should thank God that Chinese began making these goods. Rich people sometimes look down on things made in China, but everything now is made in China! All brand-name goods, iPhones, Giorgio Armani—it's all made in China!

Africa, as scholars have noted, is "off all kinds of maps."[19] China in effect puts Africa on the map again, just as it puts developing countries across the globe on the map. Copies and knockoffs are hardly to be idealized; there is definitely intellectual piracy and there are clearly numerous examples of unwary consumers being bilked—and sometimes grievously harmed—by goods such as copy medicines. These problems are real. Nonetheless, why should the goods of globalization belong only to those privileged enough to have been born into the rich world? Shouldn't they be available to all the world? I think they should,

and that copies and knockoffs should not be only criticized but also celebrated.[20] The goods of low-end globalization are, all in all, indeed a good, and their manufacturers and distributors are, I think, finally less harming the world than helping the world.

This is the ultimate significance of the processes of low-end globalization described in this book's pages. Chinese goods are fundamentally reshaping Africa and countries throughout the developing world. But are Africans and other foreigners reshaping China as well? This book has examined Guangzhou, the place in China where the presence of Africans has been most apparent. Because of the ongoing presence of Africans and other foreigners, will we come to see a multicultural Guangzhou in the future?

The situation of Africans has changed in the city. As a Congolese middleman explained, Guangzhou has become more welcoming and cosmopolitan in recent years:

> When I first came to Guangzhou ten years ago, even going to the market and explaining what you're looking for was very hard. Compared to 2006–2007 it has changed greatly. Yes, my Chinese became better, but also the Chinese got better at English. Before, when you went to the market and spoke English, they'd say, *ting bu dong, ting bu dong* [I don't understand], or they'd say "No English!" Now many Chinese can speak English, and French, Portuguese—many! Attitudes are changing too. Before, when they looked at you, they didn't want to come near: they didn't know how to communicate. After business, there was no topic to discuss with you. But now, they want to know about your personal life, about your country's culture, how people are living in Africa.

What might this imply about the future? We've heard in this chapter a number of voices waxing euphorically over the presence of African Chinese babies in Guangzhou, and the possibility of a Chinese Barack Obama in the future. However, it may be that Guangzhou's African population will not last for long. Chinese middlemen in Guangzhou seek to supplant Africans; as we've been told by Chinese, "Chinese should sell to Africans in Guangzhou. Africans shouldn't sell to Africans in Guangzhou." In other words, Africans should come for only a brief period to buy their goods and leave—Africans shouldn't remain in China, not necessarily because of racism but simply because they are occupying the middleman niche that Chinese themselves should occupy, in this view. Chinese companies seek to supplant the African middleman in south China by placing their own factories and agents in Africa and nearby countries. Indeed, there is an

ongoing tension between all the African cargo agents and middlemen portrayed in this book and Chinese companies and entrepreneurs who desire to take on this middleman role. Middlemen are not just among the primary agents in globalization, they are also among the primary profiteers of globalization; Chinese in Africa seek to take this business from Africans in China. We heard this from many of the logistics agents/middlemen we interviewed; as a Somali logistics agent and middleman said:

> Chinese companies now have offices in Dubai. There's no way you can compete with them. Yes, they are basically after my job. I hear that in Uganda, the Chinese embassy is telling Africans who apply for visas, "Why do you need to go to China when you can get anything from suppliers in Dubai, or even in Africa? Just let us know what you want, and suppliers will bring it to you." The Chinese always have an advantage in this game.

Another East African trader took a similar line:

> Yes, Africans and Chinese are in competition because the Chinese want to be in Africa rather than have Africans in China. Today one guy called me from Kenya, saying that he wanted to export copper ore. But he said that more and more Chinese are now going to Africa to buy, so he can't profitably export. A food supplier told me that the Chinese are now going directly into Tanzania and buying land for farming, so why will they need a guy like him to export from Tanzania?

The same argument offered by Chinese as to why middlemen in Guangzhou should be Chinese was also offered by Africans in African cities. As a Kenyan textile merchant in Nairobi told me, "If the Chinese open a textile factory here, then everyone would go and buy from the factory and its shop. Now we go to China and buy from the factories and import into Kenya. But when the factories come to Kenya, everyone will go to the factories instead." A Nigerian trader maintained that this wouldn't happen: "Chinese can't set up factories in African countries such as Nigeria: the power is too unreliable. It's more economical for Africans to come to Guangzhou and source." But of course if trade is lucrative enough, China will rebuild the power grid to make its factories functional—a good thing for their factories, and perhaps for Nigerians at large, but bad for those Nigerians who seek to make their livings as middlemen in China.

Others we spoke with were more confident that because Africans know the

needs of their consumers and have a better sense of African market trends, there will continue to be a place for African traders in Guangzhou to do sourcing and trade in China. Because African traders in China fill different market niches than Chinese in Africa, knowing African markets as Chinese do not, and work on a far smaller scale than Chinese traders in Africa, there will continue to be room for both. Perhaps those who say this are correct. The number of Africans in Guangzhou has diminished over the years, some observers have claimed (as we saw in chapter 2), but there clearly are a significant number of Africans in Guangzhou: some ten thousand to twenty thousand. What is their future?

One factor is purely economic. Rising wages in China may make it increasingly less attractive as a place to do business. One trader told us that "Guangzhou will become just like Jakarta and Bangkok," Asian cities where many African traders went in the 1990s and early 2000s, but that now largely have been surpassed. Guangzhou has been far more important than either of those cities in supplying the goods of globalization to Africa, but its role too may fade.[21]

Beyond this, despite the fact that Africans may find Guangzhou to be more cosmopolitan than it was a decade ago, it also seems that there is increasing tension between Chinese and Africans. Chinese mass media on occasion show considerable empathy toward Africans in Guangzhou;[22] typically Chinese mass media are more sympathetic to Africans than is more informal commentary in cyberspace.[23] But the changing intellectual climate in China—both the greater enforcement of legal rules against overstaying and other transgressions and the greater emphasis on nationalism and civic order emphasized by the Chinese leader Xi Jinping—have left some of the Africans we spoke with doubtful about their futures in the country. There is the general sense, as illustrated by comments throughout this book, that many Chinese in Guangzhou would prefer to keep Africans at arm's length as visitors rather than allow them to stay as residents, spouses, and citizens.[24]

Should China be for Chinese only? Or is it for anyone in the world who seeks to make it their home? In a temporary sense, Guangzhou is already multicultural, like Shanghai was in the 1920s, in that different groups of foreigners live in their own districts. But foreigners in Guangzhou today, like foreigners in Shanghai a century ago, may quickly enough vanish: what about the longer term, as embodied in the African Chinese families we've discussed? Bodomo has predicted that in less than a hundred years' time, a new Sino-African ethnic group will emerge.[25] Of course we can't know how reality will unfold, particularly in a place as volatile as China, but I'm skeptical. While there are indeed many foreigners in Guangzhou and hundreds of African Chinese children, I suspect that within

twenty years, the Africans portrayed in this book and their successors will mostly be gone. Business opportunities are still driving Africans to China. Nevertheless, the Chinese government has increasingly cracked down on overstayers, creating a situation where only a small number of Africans can stay in Guangzhou for longer than the few weeks allowed by their visas. Thus the opportunity for cross-cultural marriages may diminish. Of the perhaps hundreds of cross-cultural and mixed-race children, some will indeed grow up in Guangzhou; but rather than mark the beginning of a new multicultural China, they may simply become assimilated, swallowed up into an ongoing monocultural China.

There are two poles of national identity and belonging in the world today: civic belonging and ethnic belonging.[26] Civic belonging is like belonging to a club, where anyone who seeks to belong and makes a commitment can indeed belong, even though the requirements for admission may be stiff. Societies like Brazil, Canada, and the United States are close to this pole—they may be racist in many areas, but anyone, regardless of race, can potentially belong. Ethnic belonging is like belonging to a family: one can fully belong only through blood relations. Japan, Korea, and China are close to this pole: they are "among the extremely rare examples of historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogenous."[27] China, with its minority nationalities, is slightly less based in ethnic belonging than Japan and Korea; nonetheless, "most Chinese have believed that the Han people were *the* race of China, one that had absorbed people of all languages, customs, and racial and ethnic origins."[28] In the world as a whole, ethnic belonging may be increasingly giving way to civic belonging because of globalization and ethnic intermingling. The possibility of a Chinese Barack Obama signifies that China, home of close to 20 percent of the world's people, may at some point transcend "Chinese blood" to become multiethnic and multicultural.

The research described in this book has led me to conclude that this will not happen any time soon; China will remain monocultural into the foreseeable future. However, eventually it doubtless will happen. Through mixed-race babies and increasing numbers of global citizens, China for Chinese is slowly but surely giving way. China will become the home of people throughout the world.[29] The major reason that this is happening is that throughout the overwhelming majority of the world that is still "developing"—the masses of people who live in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia—many seek better lives for themselves in the developed world, whether it be Central Americans attempting to move to the United States, Africans and now Syrians and Afghans trying to make their way to Europe, or middle-class Africans and

Arabs who make their way to Guangzhou as traders. The developing world is coming to the developed world, and for all the rhetoric of Jean-Marie Le Pen or Donald Trump or all the legal actions of the Chinese government, it ultimately cannot keep them out. This book has illustrated this movement in one particular place and time, but this is happening everywhere. Foreigners will keep coming to all the world's up-and-coming cities, and sooner or later, over years, decades, generations, or centuries, they will no longer be foreigners. Ten years from now Guangzhou will probably still be largely monocultural. A hundred years from now, like every other major world city, it will probably be multicultural and global. The people portrayed in this book may not live to see it, but that day will come.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. 《中国 2010 年人口普查资料》[Tabulation on the 2010 population census of People's Republic of China],国务院人口普查办公室, 国家统计局人口和就业统计司 [Population Census Office under the State Council, Department of Population and Employment Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics], (Beijing: 中国统计出版社 [China Statistics Press], 2012). See also Haugen 2015.

2. "Guangzhou Detains or Repatriates 768 Foreigners in 8 Months," Guangdong Provincial Public Security Department, September 11, 2014. http://www.gdga.gov.cn/english/News/201409/t20140911_717531.html.

3. "Where do Foreigners Live in Guangzhou?" *Life of Guangzhou*, last updated November 28, 2008. http://www.lifeofguangzhou.com/node_10/node_35/node_163/node_378/2008/11/28/122785830456063.shtml.

4. "34,000 Foreigners Currently Reside in Guangzhou," *eChinacities.com*, October 25, 2013. http://www.echinacities.com/news/34000-Foreigners-Permanently-Reside-in-Guangzhou.

5. "Foreigners in Guangzhou." *Guangzhou International*, November 12, 2014. http://english.gz.gov.cn/gzgoven/s3616/201508/e3044083e2d844708e18040afaa056a6.shtml.

6. "Gang of Foreigners Busted in Guangzhou." *China Daily*, April 29, 2015. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/29/content_20578271.htm.

7. Mathews 2011; Mathews et al., Ribeiro, and Vega 2012.

8. Ikels 1996.

9. Pieke 2011, 44.
10. Dikötter 2011.
11. Blussé 2008, 5.
12. Wyatt 2010.
13. Nield 2010, 122.
14. Wyatt 2010, 50.
15. Vogel 1969, 18.
16. Matsuda 2012, 178.
17. Blussé 2008, 51.
18. Ibid.
19. Downs 2014, 22.
20. Hunter (1882) 1965.
21. Robbins 2002, 85.
22. Gaubatz 1998, 255.
23. Ho 2005, 50.
24. Ibid., 59.
25. Vogel 1989, 4–5.
26. Ibid., 18.
27. He Hui Feng, "Guangdong's GDP May Be Skewed by 'Carry Trade' Stats," Pearl Briefing, *South China Morning Post*, April 26, 2014.
28. A commonly used label for the Xiaobei and Guangyuanxi area is "Chocolate City" (see Pang and Yuan 2013 for a discussion of the derivation of "Chocolate City"). Because the people we interviewed never used this term, we don't use it either.
29. Few writings on Africans in Guangzhou provide a full portrayal of the Xiaobei area; one evocative portrayal is that of Castillo (2014, 244–48).
30. Bodomo (2012, 45) labels this interaction between Africans and Chinese "calculator communication."
31. Han (2013) analyzes multilingualism among Africans and Chinese in Guangzhou, with her main informants using multiple languages in their daily conversations.
32. See Rayila (2011) for a discussion of "the invisibility of Uyghurs in China proper"; see also Rudelson (1998) and Bovingdon (2010). For broader discussions of Muslim minority nationalities in China, see Gladney (1996, 2004) and Gillette (2002), and, for a more recent overview, Frankel (2011).
33. See 《广州宝汉地区曾小贩遍地 现干净整洁成异国风情非洲街》 [Once full of hawkers, Guangzhou's Baohan Street is now a clean and tidy exotic African street], *Guangzhou Daily*, October 8, 2015. http://gz.southcn.com/content/2015-08/10/content_130314995_2.htm.
34. Mathews 2011.
35. See Lin, forthcoming.
36. Although this book is primarily about foreigners in China, readers will benefit from understanding how Chinese society has evolved into what it is today. Three of the best recent books for understanding contemporary Chinese society at large are Spence 2013, Zang 2016, and Jacka, Kipnis, and Sargeson 2013. Anthropological ethnographies exploring aspects of contemporary Chinese life are legion, but to name just a few out-

standing ethnographies among many that might be named, see Jankowiak 1992, Yan 2003, Zhang 2010, Osberg 2013, and Fong 2006.

Chapter 2

1. Pieke's 2011 article on "immigrant China" offers what it refers to as a "glimpse of the future." To at least some extent, this has become Guangzhou in the present.

2. It is broadly held that Chinese in premodern eras held negative attitudes toward Africans (Dikötter 1992; Wilensky 2002; Wyatt 2010). Africans in Guangzhou were held as slaves (Wyatt 2010, 43–78). But it can be argued (see Li 2015) that Chinese prejudice was more against foreigners in general than against Africans in particular.

3. See Sautman 1994 on racism against African students in China in the 1960s–1980s; see Cheng 2011 on online Chinese discourses against Africans; see Lee 2014, 51–53, for an impressionistic account of racism against Africans in Guangzhou; and Presswood 2013 for an account of how racism may give way before China's growing internationalism. See Dikötter 2015 for a comprehensive discussion of Chinese views of race; his book's final chapter, "Race as Nationality (1949–2012)," is particularly useful in providing a context for the racial tensions described in this book.

4. See Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, and Small 2001 and Macedo and Gounari 2005 for somewhat different perspectives on racism and globalization and their interrelations.

5. Lan (2015a) discusses the parallel between internal foreigners and external foreigners in Guangzhou, and emphasizes that these groups both constitute foreignness within mainstream Guangzhou. See Mallee and Pieke 2016 for broader discussions of China's "internal and international migration."

6. This is the estimated number of Reijiro Aoyama. A 2013 article estimates five thousand Japanese "permanent residents" of Guangzhou ("Japanese and Koreans: Largest Percentage of Permanent Foreigners in Guangzhou," *Life of Guangzhou*, October 25, 2013, http://www.lifeofguangzhou.com/node_981/node_989/node_997/node_1007/2013/10/25/1382691061146318.shtml).

7. Our analysis of rumor draws from that of Harney (2006), in his discussion of the role of rumor among Bangladeshi migrant entrepreneurs in Naples, Italy. See also Mathews, Lin, and Yang 2014, 238.

8. Haugen (2013, 89) analyzes Nigerian migrants' views of the Chinese state as resembling witchcraft: "It is a malevolent and unseen force to which any number of social problems can be attributed." If this analogy is apt, then rumor is important in keeping this malevolent force at bay, or at least warning of its malevolence.

Chapter 3

1. Among books, see MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) on African entrepreneurs and hustlers in Paris, Stoller (2002) on African street vendors in New York City, and Lucht (2012) on African migrants in southern Italy. Among numerous articles, see Mazzucato (2008) for a description of Ghanaian migrants' lives between Ghana and the Netherlands, Pelican and Tatah (2009) on migration to the Gulf states and China from Cameroon, Şaul and Pelican (2014) on research paradigms on contemporary African

migration, and Cissé (2013) for a comparison between Africans in China and Chinese in Senegal.

2. To mention only a very few of the vast number of publications on Chinese in Africa, see Esteban (2010) and Giese and Thiel (2012) for interesting ethnographic articles on Chinese in different African countries. For books, see Alden (2007) for an economic analysis of Chinese in Africa, Park (2009) for an ethnographic depiction of Chinese in South Africa, and French (2014) for an ethnographic portrait of recent Chinese immigrants in a range of African societies.

3. Earlier depictions of Africans in Guangzhou, such as Bertoncello and Bredeloup (2007), Zhang (2008), Li et al. (2008) Li et al. (2009), Le Bail (2009), Bodomo (2010), Lyons et. al. (2008, 2012), Müller and Wehrhahn (2011), and Yang (2011, 2012) primarily consist of reports on the phenomenon at large, often discussing it in the context of the theoretical foci in different academic disciplines. Subsequent works offer more particular investigations, for example, Haugen (2012) on the immobility of Nigerian overstayers in Guangzhou, Haugen (2013) on African pentecostal mission theology in Guangzhou, Huynh (2016) on female African traders in Guangzhou, Lan (2015b) on Nigerian-Chinese marriages in Guangzhou and Lagos, Han (2013) on multilingualism among Africans and Chinese in Guangzhou, and Castillo (2015) on African musicians in Guangzhou and their dreams. More theoretically oriented recent articles include Marfaing and Thiel (2015) on social networks and spheres of influence among West African traders in Guangzhou, Adams (2015) on structure and agency in the lives of Africans in Guangzhou, and Gilles (2015) on translocality among Africans in Guangzhou, to name just a few of many recent works.

4. Bodomo (2012) has written a volume on Africans in China that consists largely of explications of questionnaire surveys that, while interesting in their own right (and which I cite at points in this book), don't get in depth at how Africans live and work in Guangzhou. For this, extensive ethnographic research—hanging out with people and interviewing them on a day-to-day, month-to-month basis—is required. But certainly, anyone who seeks to understand Africans in Guangzhou as well as in China at large should read Bodomo's book and should also read chapters on Africans in Guangzhou in books by Neuwirth (2011) and Lee (2014), as well as the recent book by Lan (2017).

5. The number two hundred thousand is reported in Lan 2015a, 295, and originally appeared in the *Guangzhou Daily*, December 13, 2007; the number three hundred thousand appeared in *Apple Daily*, August 8, 2014 (《亞洲最大聚居地 恐傳播伊波拉 30萬非洲人「佔領」廣州》[300,000 Africans "occupying" Guangzhou, Asia's biggest ghetto; concerns over the spread of ebola], http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/international/art/20140830/18849439).

6. 《截至25号广州实际居住非洲人口约1.6万》 [As of the 25th of October, the actual African population in Guangzhou is about 16,000], *Dayoo.com*, October 31, 2014. http://news.dayoo.com/guangzhou/201410/31/73437_38668054.htm.

7. 《广州有50万非洲人？误传！常住的仅5千多》 [There are 500,000 Africans in Guangzhou? A Rumor! The resident population is only 5,000], *Guangzhou Daily*, December 28, 2015. http://news.21cn.com/guangdong/a/2015/1228/10/30426792.shtml.

8. See Roberto Castillo "How Many Africans are in Guangzhou?" *Africans in China* website, 2013. http://africansinchina.net/how-many-africans-are-there-in-guangzhou/.

9. See Osnos 2009; Bodomo 2012, 11; Lan 2015, 113–34.

10. Li, Ma, and Xue 2009, 709.

11. Hyunh 2015.

12. Yang 2012, 159.

13. "Introduction & Recommendations to doing business in China, 2013 version," put out by the Rwanda Development Board, China Office. http://www.rwandainvest.com.cn/ last accessed May 2014).

14. This woman's view of how Chinese merchants are more likely to cheat Africans who behave discourteously reflects Jankowiak's findings (1993, 128–56) in analyzing quarrels among Chinese bicyclists after a collision. The most effective way to win the support of onlookers, Jankowiak found, was not to get angry, and not to argue, but rather to remain as polite as possible—advice that African traders might profitably take to heart.

15. This lack of trust is apparent not only in Africans' and other foreigners' dealings with Chinese, but also among Chinese themselves. Yan (2009a) has examined cases in which "good Samaritans" in China seeking to aid the elderly are sometimes extorted by the very people they are trying to help. This is within the context of a society that is rapidly becoming more individualized (Yan 2009b), with earlier social ties and restrictions giving way before the primacy of the individual self.

16. Interesting senses of Chinese views of Africans are provided in Zhao (2010) as well as in newspaper and online articles. See, e.g., China Radio International in their online series on Africans in Guangzhou, October 30–November 2, 2012: 《非洲人在广州：清真寺里的非洲义工》 [Africans in Guangzhou: African volunteers in the mosque], *CRI Online*, November 7, 2012, http://gb.cri.cn/27824/**2012**/11/07/6651s3915780.htm; 《非洲人在广州：外贸大学里的非洲留学生》[Africans in Guangzhou: African international students in the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies], *CRI Online*, October 30, 2012, http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2012/10/30/6651s3906282.htm; 《非洲人在广州：小北路上的非洲商人》 [Africans in Guangzhou: African businessmen on Xiaobei Road], *CRI Online*, October 31, 2012, http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2012/10/31/6651s3907764.htm; 《非洲人在广州：广州的"非洲酋长"》 [Africans in Guangzhou: Guangzhou's "African chiefs"], *CRI Online*, November 1, 2012, http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2012/11/01/6651s3909542.htm; 《非洲人在广州：广东人的非洲女婿》 [Africans in Guangzhou: Cantonese people's African son-in-law], *CRI Online*, November 2, 2012, http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2012/11/02/6651s3911220.htm. More recent reports include 《非洲小伙广州淘金记 希望将来娶个中国老婆》 [The gold rush of a young African man who wishes to marry a Chinese woman in the future], *Guangzhou Daily*, March 6, 2016. http://news.dayoo.com/guangzhou/201606/03/139995_47442614.htm.

17. Dirlikov and Jiang (2014) report on an increase in wariness toward Africans among Chinese in Guangzhou in the fall of 2014 due to fears of the Ebola virus.

Chapter 4

1. Mathews and Vega 2012, 1. See also Ribeiro 2006, 2009; Mathews 2011, 19–20; Mathews, Ribeiro, and Vega 2012; Mathews and Yang 2012; and Neuwirth 2011. In a broader analytic sense, see Hansen, Little, and Milgram 2013; Abraham and Schendel 2005; and Smart and Smart 2005. Low-end globalization corresponds in large part to what earlier writers have called "the informal economy" (Hart 1973; Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989; Hansen and Vaa 2004), but while these earlier writers focused largely on trade internal to one country, "low-end globalization" transposes these to trade between countries and in the world as a whole.

2. Yang 2011, 66.

3. See Shepherd 2012 for a discussion of low-end globalization at work in the United States, in this case a Washington D.C. street market.

4. Yang (2012, 160) has estimated that among Nigerian traders, about half of newly arrived traders lose all their money and never return to Guangzhou.

5. The copy surge of mobile phones in 2006–2009 was largely due to MediaTek, a Taiwanese company whose chips enabled a wave of copy phones (see Lin 2011, 18–19); this ended with the advent of smartphones. MediaTek announced in 2013 that it has the capacity to provide motherboards for smartphones, but we have not yet seen evidence of cheap, high-quality copy smartphones in Xiaobei markets.

6. Lin 2011, 18.

7. See, for example, Mark Turnage, "A Mind-Blowing Number of Counterfeit Goods Come from China," *Business Insider*, June 25, 2013, http://www.businessinsider.com/most-counterfeit-goods-are-from-china-2013-6#ixzz3X6v0viI6; see also Angelo Young, "How China's Alibaba Helps Counterfeit Goods Reach US Pirates, Amazon," *International Business Times*, January 28, 2015. http://www.ibtimes.com/how-chinas-alibaba-helps-counterfeit-goods-reach-us-pirates-amazon-1798174.

8. Hansen 1999, 347, 352.

9. Yang 2011, 79.

10. See George 2013.

11. Li, Lyons, and Brown 2012, 57, as cited in Castillo 2014, 237.

12. Chalfin (2012, 525), in her ethnography of customs at Kotoka International Airport in Ghana, discusses the emphasis among customs officials and their bosses on meeting international standards such as those of the World Customs Organization. But she also implies the enormous allure of customs work because so much money can be made from payoffs, as well as African governments' reliance on customs for half of their tax revenue (524, 528, 535n11).

13. See Cissé 2015 for an extended analysis of African traders in Yiwu. Bodomo and Ma (2010) have argued that Yiwu is eclipsing Guangzhou as a site for African trade in China because its reception of Africans is more positive.

14. Among many other accounts available on the Internet, see, for example, "Turkey Cracks Down on Counterfeit Goods," *Guardian* October 7, 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/17/turkey-counterfeit-goods-trade.

15. See Keshodkar 2014.

16. See Carrier 2012, Carrier and Lochery 2013, and Carrier 2016 for discussions of the development of Eastleigh through Somali trade networks.

17. He is perhaps referring to "key money," although this is unclear. See Carrier 2016, 85–89.

Chapter 5

1. Haugen 2012, 73.

2. Yang 2011, 26.

3. Yang 2012, 154. Some media outlets reported that he had died, but the *South China Morning Post* subsequently reported that he was seriously injured. See Chloe Lai, "Feared Dead After Fall, Nigerian Alive But Critically Ill," *South China Morning Post*, July 17, 2009.

4. Lan 2015a, 293.

5. Lan notes a crackdown on drug trafficking in China in 2013 (Lan 2015a, 301). She also discusses how "Guangdong province is an experiment field in China's evolving immigration policies," one characterized by "tension between the central state's pro-African political ideology and the local Guangdong authorities' anti-African immigration policy" (291). Guangzhou is widely reputed to be the harshest city in China in its treatment of overstaying foreigners. Lan analyzes the Guangdong Act of 2011, whereby Chinese began to be rewarded for providing information on illegal aliens in the province; but its effects, she notes, were full of unintended consequences. Bork-Hüffer and Yuan (2014, 571–72) discuss how, in China as a whole over the past few years, "while there has been a rhetorical shift from a focus on strictly managing and controlling foreigners in China to attracting and promoting their inflow," in fact "the current PRC regime does not intend to increase the number of foreigners substantially and approaches its foreign population cautiously."

6. Yang 2012, 162.

7. As noted by Haugen 2012, 73.

8. Ibid., 74.

9. See Meilian Lin, "Home Away From Home: More Foreign Asylum Seekers Turning to China for Help," *Global Times*, December 23, 2013.

10. Lan (2015a, 295) notes that before the Guangdong Act came into effect in 2011, "only foreign affairs police could stop foreigners to verify passports. However, in the Guangdong Act 'foreign affairs police' was changed to 'people's police'. . . . This change in terminology has greatly expanded the power of local police and helped breed corruption and abuse of power in the police force" in their dealings with foreigners.

11. See, to take a report in English, "Guangzhou Authorities Arrest 168 in Drug Raid; Includes Foreigners," *eChinacities.com*, August 14, 2013, http://www.echinacities.com/news/Guangzhou-Authorities-Arrest-168-in-Drug-Raid-Includes-Foreigners.

12. Yang 2011, 63–64.

13. Yang 2011, 84.

14. Yang 2011, 73.

Chapter 6

1. Another treatment of this chapter's argument appears in Mathews (2015b), from which some of this chapter is derived. Le Bail (2009, 14–17) also discusses this niche of Africans in Guangzhou.

2. Nordstrom 2007, 117–22.

3. See Mathews 2015a for a more extensive discussion of how to get copies past customs.

4. See, for example, Foster 2006 and Dinneen 2010, among other discussions of the role of middlemen in furthering globalization. There are numerous ethnographic depictions of middlemen, from Mintz (1956) on middlemen in the Caribbean to Cheuk (2013) on Indian middlemen in China.

5. A cultural broker has been defined as "a person who facilitates the border crossing of another person or group of people from one culture to another culture" (Michie 2013); cultural brokering has been defined as "the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of different cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change" (Jezewski and Sotnik 2001).

6. See Geertz 1960, Adams 1970, and Szasz 1994 for anthropological discussions of cultural brokers, as well as, from a more contemporary, nonanthropological vantage point, Graham 2011.

Chapter 7

1. The African Christian churches described in this chapter bear considerable resemblance to African diasporic churches in Europe and elsewhere, as explored by Adogame, Gerloff, and Hock (2009) and Adogame (2013), not least in some of these churches' emphasis on the prosperity gospel (Aechtner 2015). The major difference between African diasporic churches in China and elsewhere is that the churches in China are mostly illegal, and are seen as a direct threat to the Chinese state, at least to the extent that these churches proselytize.

2. Castillo (2015, 88–89) discusses how for some Africans in Guangzhou, making money is a means for their pursuit of dreams, for his informants a career in music, just as for many of the people discussed in this chapter, religion is ultimately more important than business.

3. Yang 2011, 104.

4. See Carrier 2012.

5. Haugen 2013, 86.

6. See《广东省宗教事务条例》 [Guangdong religious affairs regulation]. http://www.gzmzzj.gov.cn/mzzjswj/zjfg/201204/915412.shtml.

7. Haugen 2013, 87–88.

8. Royal Victory Church International and its conflicts with the Chinese state are vividly depicted in Zhao and Bandurski's film *My Father's House* (2011); these are briefly discussed in Rennie (2009) and Haugen (2013, 89).

9. Yang 2011, 102.

10. Zhao and Bandurski 2011.

11. Liang 2014, 53.

12. Different African national communities often have organizations in Guangzhou. We have not focused on these, because they are generally of not much relevance to the traders and middlemen we spoke with, but see Bodomo 2012, 55–57.

13. Weber (1920–21) 1958.

Chapter 8

1. Li, Ma, and Xue 2009, 703.

2. Castillo 2014, 242; see also Castillo 2016.

3. Castillo 2014, 242.

4. The 2004 Regulations on Examination and Approval of Permanent Residence of Aliens in China (http://ae.chineseembassy.org/eng/lsyw/1/1/t152147.htm) discuss a number of paths through which foreigners can become eligible for permanent residence in China. There is a new green card system for foreigners implemented in 2013 (http://en.safea.gov.cn/2013–11/19/content_17196413.htm), which makes the process of obtaining of permanent residency easier, although we have not heard about this on the ground in Guangzhou.

5. See Zhou and Cai 2008 for a more extended analysis of internal migrant workers in Guangzhou.

6. From Yang 2011, 89, with stylistic revisions.

7. From Yang 2011, 91 with stylistic revisions.

8. Lan makes this point in her article on Nigerian-Chinese marriages in Guangzhou and Lagos (2015b, 138). Lan (2015b) and Marsh (2015) provide insightful glimpses into Nigerian-Chinese marriages and the difficulties these marriages may encounter.

9. Yang 2011, 91–93.

10. From Yang 2011, 93–94, with stylistic revisions.

11. This pattern, is, however, changing, as more free choice comes into play. See "South Korea's Foreign Brides: Farmed Out," *The Economist*, May 24, 2014. http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21602761-korean-men-are-marrying-foreigners-more-choice-necessity-farmed-out.

12. See "Regulations on Permanent Residence of Aliens in China," http://www.travelchinaguide.com/embassy/visa/permanent-residence-permit.htm

13. Lan 2015b, 141

14. See "Can a Mixed-Race Contestant Become a Chinese Idol?" *Time.com*, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1925589,00.html; and "Shanghai 'Black Girl' Lou Jing Abused by Racist Netizens," *Chinasmack*, September 1, 2009, http://www.chinasmack.com/2009/stories/shanghaiblack-girl-lou-jing-racist-chinese-netizens.html. See Lan 2015b, 139 for commentary on this.

15. Yang 2011, 96.

16. Yang 2011, 94–95.

17. For one popular but perceptive account of the Chinese colonization of Africa through its massive number of migrants going to the continent, see French 2014.

18. See, in this context, Sautman and Yan (2009), who discuss African views of China-African linkages.

19. Allen and Hamnett 1995, 2; see also Ferguson 2007, 25–49.

20. The common Western view that this is intellectual piracy that hurts the original companies is disputed by some we have interviewed, such as the former Nokia employee who said in 2008 that Nokia did not fundamentally object to copies, since they knew that those who bought Nokia copies aspired to own the original (Mathews 2011, 148–49). This may be true for fashion as well, as Surowiecki (2007) argues. See also Mathews 2016.

21. See the 2016 CNN article "The African Migrants Giving Up on the Chinese Dream," September 26, 2016 (originally published June 26, 2016). http://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/26/asia/africans-leaving-guangzhou-china/index.html. Another article title declared that "African Migrants are Returning from China and Telling their Compatriots Not to Go," *Quartz Africa*, July 1, 2016, https://qz.com/720816/gambian-migrants-are-returning-from-china-and-telling-their-compatriots-not-to-go/?utm_source=YPL&yptr=yahoo. A Chinese report questions the CNN article: 《广州常住非洲人增加流动人口减少 专家：人数波动属正常》 [African permanent residents in Guangzhou increase while the mobile population decreases. Experts: fluctuations of numbers are normal], *Yancheng Evening News*, July 16, 2016, http://news.ycwb.com/2016-07/16/content_22526216.htm.

22. For reports that sympathetically portray Africans in Guangzhoum see, e.g., the following. 《非洲人在广东: 怀揣梦想而来 闯出一片天地》 [Africans in Guangdong: They came with dreams and succeeded], *Nanfang Daily*, December 15, 2014, http://epaper.southcn.com/nfdaily/html/2014-12/15/content_7380184.htm; and 《在华非洲人吐槽"小烦恼"：会因"肤色"遇到尴尬 支持中国打击三非》 ["Africans in China complain of "little troubles": Embarrassed by their "skin color," they support the Chinese government strike on "three illegals" (illegal immigration, residence, and employment of foreigners], *Global Times*, November 25, 2016, http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2016-11/9729456.html.

23. See Cheng 2011.

24. Lan (2014a, 299) cites Chinese government officials with opposing views as to whether or not China is welcome to Africans coming to China; Huffer and Yuan (2014) also depict Chinese governmental ambivalence toward foreigners in China.

25. Bodomo 2010, 694; see Castillo 2014, 254 for a skeptical reading of this claim.

26. See Smith 1990, 11, among many other scholars who have discussed this distinction.

27. Hobsbawm 1990, 66.

28. Wu 1991, 150–51 (original emphasis).

29. Pieke 2012 is a precursor of this view.

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